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W. ROBERTSON NICOLL, M.A., LL.D.

*Editor of "The Expositor," etc.*

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## THE EPISTLE OF ST PAUL TO THE ROMANS

BY

HANDLEY C. G. MOULE, M.A.

NEW YORK
A. C. ARMSTRONG AND SON
51 EAST TENTH STREET
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THE REV. ROBERT SINKER, D.D.,

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MY FRIEND OF THIRTY-TWO YEARS,

TO WHOSE KINDNESS AND KNOWLEDGE

I AM DEEPLY AND INCREASINGLY INDEBTED,

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY

INSCRIBED.

H. C. G. M.

HEARING read, as I do continually, the Epistles of the blessed Paul . . . I delight in the enjoyment of his spiritual trumpet, and my heart leaps up, and my longings set me glowing, as I recognize the voice so dear to me, and seem to image the speaker all but present to me, and to see him in discourse. But I mourn and am distressed, because all do not know this man as they should know him. . . . It is from hence our myriad evils spring —from our ignorance of the Scriptures. Hence grows this epidemic of our heresies; hence our neglected lives, hence our unfruitful toil.

ST CHRYSOSTOM, *Preamble to Homilies on the Epistle to the Romans.*

# PREFACE

HE who attempts to expound the Epistle to the Romans, when his sacred task is over, is little disposed to speak about his Commentary ; he is occupied rather with an ever deeper reverence and wonder over the Text which he has been permitted to handle, a Text so full of a marvellous man, above all so full of GOD.

But it seems needful to say a few words about the style of the running Translation of the Epistle which will be found interwoven with this Exposition.

The writer is aware that the translation is often rough and formless. His apology is that it has been done with a view not to a connected reading but to the explanation of details. A rough piece of rendering, which would be a misrepresentation in a continuous version, because it would be out of scale with the general style, seems to be another matter when it only calls the reader's attention to a particular point presented for study at the moment.

Again, he is aware that his rendering of the

Greek article in many passages (for example, where he has ventured to explain it by "*our*," "*true*," etc.) is open to criticism. But he intends no more in such places than a suggestion; and he is conscious, as he has said sometimes at the place, that it is almost impossible to render the article as he has done in these cases without a certain exaggeration, which must be discounted by the reader.

The use of the article in Greek is one of the simplest and most assured things in grammar, as to its main principles. But as regards some details of the application of principle, there is nothing in grammar which seems so easily to elude the line of law.

It is scarcely necessary to say that on questions of literary criticism which in no respect, or at most remotely, concern exposition, this Commentary says little or nothing. It is well known to literary students of the Epistle that some phenomena in the text, from the close of ch. xiv. onwards, have raised important and complex questions. It has been asked whether the great Doxology (xvi. 25-27) always stood where it now stands; whether it should stand at the close of our ch. xiv.; whether its style and wording allow us to regard it as contemporary with the Epistle as a whole, or whether they indicate that it was written later in St Paul's course; whether our fifteenth and

sixteenth chapters, while Pauline, are not out of place in an Epistle to Rome; in particular, whether the list of names in ch. xvi. is compatible with a Roman destination.

These questions, with one exception, that which affects the list of names, are not even touched upon in the present Exposition. The expositor, personally convinced that the pages we know as the Epistle to the Romans are not only all genuine but all intimately coherent, has not felt himself called to discuss, in a devotional writing, subjects more proper to the lecture-room and the study; and which certainly would be out of place in the ministry of the pulpit.

Meantime, those who care to read a masterly *debate* on the literary problems in question may consult the recently published volume (1893), *Biblical Studies*, by the late Bishop Lightfoot, of Durham. That volume contains (pp. 287-374) three critical Essays (1869, 1871), two by Bishop Lightfoot, one by the late Dr Hort, on *The Structure and Destination of the Epistle to the Romans*. The two illustrious friends,—Hort criticizing Lightfoot, Lightfoot replying to Hort,—examine the phenomena of Rom. xv.-xvi. Lightfoot advocates the theory that St Paul, some time after writing the Epistle, issued an abridged edition for wider circulation, omitting the direction to Rome, closing the document with our ch. xiv., and then (not before) writing, as a

finale, the great Doxology. Hort holds to the practical entirety of the Epistle as we have it, and reasons at length for the contemporaneousness of xvi. 25-27 with the rest.*

We may note here that both Hort and Lightfoot contend for *the conciliatory* aim of the Roman Epistle. They regard the great passage about Israel (ix.-xi.) as in some sense the heart of the Epistle, and the doctrinal passages preceding this as all more or less meant to bear on the relations not only of the Law and the Gospel, but of the Jew and the Gentile as members of the one Christian Church. There is great value in this suggestion, explained and illustrated as it is in the Essays in question. But the thought may easily be worked to excess. It seems plain to the present writer that when the Epistle is studied from within its deepest spiritual element, it shews us the Apostle fully mindful of the largest aspects of the life and work of the Church, but also, and yet more, occupied with the problem of the relation of the believing sinner to God. The question of personal salvation was never, by St Paul, forgotten in that of Christian policy.

To return for a moment to this Exposition, or rather to its setting; it may be doubted whether, in imagining the dictation of the Epistle to be begun and completed

* See also Westcott and Hort's *N.T. in the Original Greek*, vol. 2, Appendix, pp. 110-114 (ed. 1).

by St Paul *within one day* we have not imagined "a hard thing." But at worst it is not an impossible thing, if the Apostle's utterance was as sustained as his thought.

It remains only to express the hope that these pages may serve in some degree to convey to their readers a new *Tolle, Lege* for the divine Text itself; if only by suggesting to them sometimes the words of St Augustine, "*To Paul I appeal from all interpreters of his writings.*"

RIDLEY HALL, CAMBRIDGE,
ALL SAINTS' DAY, 1893.

ERRATA.

Page 113, line 8, *for* "circumcision" *read* "uncircumcision."
,, 263, ,, 15, *for* "אֲמֵן׃," *read* "אָמֵן׃."

FORASMUCH as this Epistle is . . . a light and way unto the whole Scripture, I think it meet that every Christian man not only know it, by rote and without the book, but also exercise himself therein evermore continually, as with the daily bread of the soul. No man verily can read it too oft, or study it too well; for the more it is studied, the easier it is; the more it is chewed, the pleasanter it is; and the more groundly it is searched, the preciouser things are found in it, so great treasure of spiritual things lieth hid therein.

W. TYNDALE, after LUTHER.

TOWARDS the close of one of my nights of suffering, at half-past four, I asked my kind watcher . . . to read me a chapter of the Word of God. He proposed the eighth of the Epistle to the Romans. I assented, but with the request that, to secure the connexion of ideas, he would go back to the sixth, and even to the fifth. We read in succession the four chapters, v., vi., vii., viii., and I thought no more of sleep. . . . Then we read the ninth, and the remaining passages, to the end, with an interest always equal and sustained; and then the first four, that nothing might be lost. About two hours had passed. . . . I cannot tell you how I was struck, in thus reading the Epistle as a whole, with the seal of divinity, of truth, of holiness, of love, and of power, which is impressed on every page, on every word. We felt, my young friend and I, . . . that we were listening to a voice from heaven.

A. MONOD, *Adieux*, § V., *Quelques Mots sur la Lecture de la Bible.*

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## CHAPTER I

### *TIME, PLACE, AND OCCASION*

IT is the month of February, in the year of Christ 58.* In a room in the house of Gaius, a wealthy Corinthian Christian, Paul the Apostle, having at his side his amanuensis Tertius, addresses himself to write to the converts of the mission at Rome.

The great world meanwhile is rolling on its way. It is the fourth year of Nero; he is Consul the third time, with Valerius Messala for his colleague; Poppæa has lately caught the unworthy Prince in the net of her bad influence. Domitius Corbulo has just resumed the war with Parthia, and prepares to penetrate the highlands of Armenia. Within a few weeks, in the full spring, an Egyptian impostor is about to inflame Jerusalem with his Messianic claim, to lead four thousand fanatics into the desert, and to return to the city with a host of thirty thousand men, only to be totally routed by the legionaries of Felix. For himself, the Apostle is about to close his three months' stay at Corinth; he has heard of plots against his life, and will in prudence decline the more direct route from Cenchrea by sea, striking northward for Philippi, and thence over the Ægæan to Troas. Jerusalem he must visit, if possible before May is over, for he has by him the Greek

* See Lewin, *Fasti Sacri*, § 1854, etc.

collections to deliver to the poor converts of Jerusalem. Then, in the vista of his further movements, he sees Rome, and thinks with a certain apprehension yet with longing hope about life and witness there.

A Greek Christian woman is about to visit the City, Phœbe, a ministrant of the mission at Cenchrea. He must commend her to the Roman brethren; and a deliberate Letter to them is suggested by this personal need.

His thoughts have long gravitated to the City of the World. Not many months before, at Ephesus, when he had "purposed in the Spirit" to visit Jerusalem, he had said, with an emphasis which his biographer remembered, "I must also see Rome" (Acts xix. 21); "*I must*," in the sense of a divine decree, which had written this journey down in the plan of his life. He was assured too, by circumstantial and perhaps by supernatural signs, that he had "now no more place in these parts" (Rom. xv. 23)—that is, in the Eastern Roman world where hitherto all his labour had been spent. The Lord who in former days had shut Paul up to a track which led him through Asia Minor to the Ægæan, and across the Ægæan to Europe (Acts xvi.), now prepared to guide him, though by paths which His servant knew not, from Eastern Europe to Western, and before all things to the City. Amongst these providential preparations was a growing occupation of the Apostle's thought with persons and interests in the Christian circle there. Here, as we have seen, was Phœbe, about to take ship for Italy. Yonder, in the great Capital, were now resident again the beloved and faithful Aquila and Prisca, no longer excluded by the Claudian edict, and proving already, we may fairly conclude, the central influence in the mission, whose first days perhaps dated from the Pentecost itself, when

Roman "strangers" (Acts ii. 10) saw and heard the wonders and the message of that hour. At Rome also lived other believers personally known to Paul, drawn by unrecorded circumstances to the Centre of the world. "His well-beloved" Epænetus was there; Mary, who had sometimes tried hard to help him; Andronicus, and Junias, and Herodion, his relatives; Amplias and Stachys, men very dear to him; Urbanus, who had worked for Christ at his side; Rufus, no common Christian in his esteem, and Rufus' mother, who had once watched over Paul with a mother's love. All these rise before him as he thinks of Phœbe, and her arrival, and the faces and the hands which at his appeal would welcome her in the Lord, under the holy freemasonry of primeval Christian fellowship.

Besides, he has been hearing about the actual state of that all-important mission. As "all roads led to Rome," so all roads led from Rome, and there were Christian travellers everywhere (i. 8) who could tell him how the Gospel fared among the metropolitan brethren. As he heard of them, so he prayed for them, "without ceasing" (i. 9), and made request too for himself, now definitely and urgently, that his way might be opened to visit them at last.

To pray for others, if the prayer is prayer indeed, and based to some extent on knowledge, is a sure way to deepen our interest in them, and our sympathetic insight into their hearts and conditions. From the human side, nothing more than these tidings and these prayers was needed to draw from St Paul a written message to be placed in Phœbe's care. From this same human side again, when he once addressed himself to write, there were circumstances of thought and action which would naturally give direction to his message.

He stood amidst circumstances most significant and suggestive in matters of Christian *truth*. Quite recently his Judaist rivals had invaded the congregations of Galatia, and had led the impulsive converts there to quit what seemed their firm grasp on the truth of Justification by Faith only. To St Paul this was no mere battle of abstract definitions, nor again was it a matter of merely local importance. The success of the alien teachers in Galatia shewed him that the same specious mischiefs might win their way, more or less quickly, anywhere. And what would such success mean? It would mean the loss of the joy of the Lord, and the strength of that joy, in the misguided Churches. Justification by Faith meant nothing less than *Christ all in all*, literally all in all, for sinful man's pardon and acceptance. It meant a profound simplicity of personal reliance altogether upon Him before the fiery holiness of eternal Law. It meant a look out and up, at once intense and unanxious, from alike the virtues and the guilt of man, to the mighty merits of the Saviour. It was precisely the foundation-fact of salvation, which secured that the process should be, from its beginning, not humanitarian but divine. To discredit *that* was not merely to disturb the order of a missionary community; it was to hurt the vitals of the Christian soul, tinging with impure elements the mountain springs of the peace of God. Fresh as he was now from combating this evil in Galatia, St Paul would be sure to have it in his thoughts when he turned to Rome; for there it was only too certain that his active adversaries would do their worst; probably they were at work already.

Then, he had been just engaged also with the problems of Christian *life*, in the mission at Corinth.

There the main trouble was less of creed than of conduct. In the Corinthian Epistles we find no great traces of an energetic heretical propaganda, but rather a bias in the converts towards a strange licence of temper and life. Perhaps this was even accentuated by a popular logical assent to the truth of Justification *taken alone*, isolated from other concurrent truths, tempting the Corinthian to dream that he might "continue in sin that grace might abound." If such were his state of spiritual thought, he would encounter (by his own fault) a positive moral danger in the supernatural "Gifts" which at Corinth about that time seem to have appeared with quite abnormal power. An antinomian theory, in the presence of such exaltations, would lead the man easily to the conception that he was too free and too rich in the supernatural order to be the servant of common duties, and even of common morals. Thus the Apostle's soul would be full of the need of expounding to its depths the vital harmony of the Lord's work *for* the believer and the Lord's work *in* him; the co-ordination of a free acceptance with both the precept and the possibility of holiness. He must shew once for all how the justified are bound to be pure and humble, and how they can so be, and what forms of practical dutifulness their life must take. He must make it clear for ever that the Ransom which releases also purchases; that the Lord's freeman is the Lord's property; that the Death of the Cross, reckoned as the death of the justified sinner, leads direct to his living union with the Risen One, including a union of will with will; and that thus the Christian life, if true to itself, *must* be a life of loyalty to every obligation, every relation, constituted in God's providence among men. The Christian who is not attentive

to others, even where their mere prejudices and mistakes are in question, is a Christian out of character. So is the Christian who is not a scrupulously loyal citizen, recognizing civil order as the will of God. So is the Christian who in any respect claims to live as he pleases, instead of as the bondservant of his Redeemer should live.

Another question had been pressing the Apostle's mind, and that for years, but recently with a special weight. It was the mystery of Jewish unbelief. Who can estimate the pain and greatness of that mystery in the mind of St Paul? His own conversion, while it taught him patience with his old associates, must have filled him also with some eager hopes for them. Every deep and self-evidencing manifestation of God in a man's soul suggests to him naturally the thought of the glorious things possible in the souls of others. Why should not the leading Pharisee, now converted, be the signal, and the means, of the conversion of the Sanhedrin, and of the people? But the hard mystery of sin crossed such paths of expectation, and more and more so as the years went on. Judaism outside the Church was stubborn, and energetically hostile. And within the Church, sad and ominous fact, it crept in underground, and sprung up in an embittered opposition to the central truths. What did all this mean? Where would it end? Had Israel sinned, collectively, beyond pardon and repentance? Had God cast off His people? These troublers of Galatia, these fiery rioters before the tribunal of Gallio at Corinth, did their conduct mean that all was over for the race of Abraham? The question was agony to Paul; and he sought his Lord's answer to it as a thing without which he could not live. That answer was full in his soul when he meditated his

Letter to Rome, and thought of the Judaists there, and also of the loving Jewish friends of his heart there who would read his message when it came.

Thus we venture to describe the possible outward and inward conditions under which the Epistle to the Romans was conceived and written. Well do we recollect that our account is conjectural. But the Epistle in its wonderful fulness, both of outline and of detail, gives to such conjectures more than a shadow for basis. We do not forget again that the Epistle, whatever the Writer saw around him or felt within him, was, when produced, infinitely more than the resultant of Paul's mind and life; it was, and is, an oracle of God, a Scripture, a revelation of eternal facts and principles by which to live and die. As such we approach it in this book; not to analyse only or explain, but to submit and to believe; taking it as not only Pauline but Divine. But then, it is not the less therefore Pauline. And this means that both the thought and the circumstances of St Paul are to be traced and felt in it as truly, and as naturally, as if we had before us the letter of an Augustine, or a Luther, or a Pascal. He who chose the writers of the Holy Scriptures, many men scattered over many ages, used them each in his surroundings and in his character, yet so as to harmonize them all in the Book which, while many, is one. He used them with the sovereign skill of Deity. And that skilful use meant that He used their whole being, which He had made, and their whole circumstances, which He had ordered. They were indeed His amanuenses; nay, I fear not to say they were His pens. But He is such that He can manipulate as His facile implement no mere piece of mechanism, which, however subtle and powerful, is mechanism still, and can never

truly cause anything; He can take a human personality, made in His own image, pregnant, formative, causative, in all its living thought, sensibility, and will, and can throw it freely upon its task of thinking and expression—and behold, the product will be His; His matter, His thought, His exposition, His Word, "living and abiding for ever."

Thus we enter in spirit the Corinthian citizen's house, in the sunshine of the early Greek spring, and find our way invisible and unheard to where Tertius sits with his reed-pen and strips of papyrus, and where Paul is prepared to give him, word by word, sentence by sentence, this immortal message. Perhaps the corner of the room is heaped with hair-cloth from Cilicia, and the implements of the tent-maker. But the Apostle is now the guest of Gaius, a man whose means enable him to be "the host of the whole Church"; so we may rather think that for the time this manual toil is intermitted. Do we seem to see the form and face of him who is about to dictate? The mist of time is in our eyes; but we may credibly report that we find a small and much emaciated frame, and a face remarkable for its arched brows and wide forehead, and for the expressive mobility of the lips.* We trace in looks, in manner and tone of utterance, and even in unconscious attitude and action, tokens of a mind rich in every faculty, a nature equally strong in energy and in sympathy, made both to govern and to win, to will and to love. The man is great and wonderful, a master soul, subtle,

* See Lewin, *Life and Epistles of St Paul*, ii. 411, for an engraving of a fine medallion, shewing the heads of St Paul and St Peter. "The medal is referred to the close of the first century or the beginning of the second."

wise, and strong. Yet he draws us with pathetic force to his heart, as one who asks and will repay affection.

As we look on his face we think, with awe and gladness, that with those same thought-tired eyes (and are they not also troubled with disease?) he has literally seen, only twenty years ago, so he will quietly assure us, the risen and glorified JESUS. His work during those twenty years, his innumerable sufferings, above all, his spirit of perfect mental and moral sanity, yet of supernatural peace and love,—all make his assurance absolutely trustworthy. He is a transfigured man since that sight of Jesus Christ, who now "dwells in his heart by faith," and uses him as the vehicle of His will and work. And now listen. The Lord is speaking through His servant. The scribe is busy with his pen, as the message of Christ is uttered through the soul and from the lips of Paul.

## CHAPTER II

### *THE WRITER AND HIS READERS*

ROMANS i. 1-7

Ver. 1. **Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ.** So the man opens his Lord's message with his own name. We may, if we please, leave it and pass on, for to the letter-writer of that day it was as much a matter of course to prefix the personal name to the letter as it is to us to append it. But then, as now, the name was not a mere word of routine; certainly not in the communications of a religious leader. It avowed responsibility; it put in evidence a person. In a letter of public destination it set the man in the light and glare of publicity, as truly as when he spoke in the Christian assembly, or on the Areopagus, or from the steps of the castle at Jerusalem. It tells us here, on the threshold, that the messages we are about to read are given to us as "truth through personality"; they come through the mental and spiritual being of this wonderful and most real man. If we read his character aright in his letters, we see in him a fineness and dignity of thought which would not make the publication of himself a light and easy thing. But his sensibilities, with all else he has, have been given to Christ (who never either slights or spoils such gifts, while He accepts them); and if it will the better

win attention to the Lord that the servant should stand out conspicuously, to point to Him, it shall be done.

For he is indeed "*Jesus Christ's bondservant*"; not His ally merely, or His subject, or His friend. Recently, writing to the Galatian converts, he has been vindicating the glorious liberty of the Christian, set free at once from "the curse of the law" and from the mastery of self. But there too, at the close (vi. 17), he has dwelt on his own sacred bondage; "the brand of his Master, Jesus." The liberty of the Gospel is the silver side of the same shield whose side of gold is an unconditional vassalage to the liberating Lord. Our freedom is "in the Lord" alone; and to be "in the Lord" is to belong to Him, as wholly as a healthy hand belongs, in its freedom, to the physical centre of life and will. To be a bondservant is terrible in the abstract. To be "Jesus Christ's bondservant" is Paradise, in the concrete. Self-surrender, taken alone, is a plunge into a cold void. When it is surrender to "the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20), it is the bright home-coming of the soul to the seat and sphere of life and power.

This bondservant of His now before us, dictating, is **called to be an Apostle**. Such is his particular department of servitude in the "great house." It is a rare commission—to be a chosen witness of the Resurrection, a divinely authorized "bearer" of the holy Name, a first founder and guide of the universal Church, a *legatus a latere* of the Lord Himself. Yet the apostleship, to St Paul, is but a species of the one genus, bondservice. "To every man is his work," given by the one sovereign will. In a Roman household one slave would water the garden, another keep accounts, another

in the library would do skilled literary work; yet all equally would be "not their own, but bought with a price." So in the Gospel, then, and now. All functions of Christians are alike expressions of the one will of Him who has purchased, and who "calls."

Meanwhile, this bondservant-apostle, because "under authority," carries authority. His MASTER has spoken to him, that he may speak. He writes to the Romans as man, as friend, but also as the "vessel of choice, to bear the Name" (Acts ix. 15) of Jesus Christ.

Such is the sole essential work and purpose of his life. He is **separated to the Gospel of God**; isolated from all other ruling aims to this. In some respects he is the least isolated of men; he is in contact all round with human life. Yet he is "*separated.*" In Christ, and for Christ, he lives apart from even the worthiest personal ambitions. Richer than ever, since he "was in Christ" (xvi. 7), in all that makes man's nature wealthy, in power to know, to will, to love, he uses all his riches always for "this one thing," to make men understand "*the Gospel of God.*" Such isolation, behind a thousand contacts, is the Lord's call for His true followers still.

"*The Gospel*": word almost too familiar now, till the thing is too little understood. What is it? In its native meaning, its eternally proper meaning, it is the divine "Good Tidings." It is the announcement of Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour of men, in whom God and man meet with joy. That announcement stands in living relation to a bright chain of precepts, and also to the sacred darkness of convictions and warnings; we shall see this amply illustrated in this Epistle. But neither precepts nor threatenings are properly *the Gospel.* The Gospel saves from sin, and

enables for holy conduct. But in itself it is the pure, mere message of redeeming Love.

It is "*the Gospel of God*"; that is, as the neighbouring sentences shew it, the Gospel of the blessed FATHER. Its origin is in the Father's love, the eternal hill whence runs the eternal stream of the work of the Son and the power of the Spirit. "God loved the world"; "The Father sent the Son." The stream leads us up to the mount. "Hereby perceive we the love of God." In the Gospel, and in it alone, we have that certainty, "God *is* Love."

Now he dilates a little in passing on this dear theme, the Gospel of God. He whom it reveals as eternal Love was true to Himself in the preparation as in the event; He **promised** His Gospel **beforehand through His prophets in (the) holy Scriptures.** The sunrise of Christ was no abrupt, insulated phenomenon, unintelligible because out of relation. "Since the world began" (Luke i. 70), from the dawn of human history, predictive word and manifold preparing work had gone before. To think now only of the prediction, more or less articulate, and not of the preparation through general divine dealings with man—such had the prophecy been that, as the pagan histories tell us,* "the whole East" heaved with expectations of a Judæan world-rule about the time when, as a fact, Jesus came. He came, alike to disappoint every merely popular hope and to satisfy at once the concrete details and the spiritual significance of the long forecast. And He sent His messengers out to the world carrying as their text

Ver. 2.

* Percrebuerat Oriente toto vetus et constans opinio, esse in fatis ut eo tempore (cir. A.D. 70) profecti Judæa rerum potirentur.—Suetonius, *Vesp.*, c. 4. Tacitus (*Hist.*, v. 13) says the same, and that the hope was based on the *antiqui sacerdotum libri.*

and their voucher that old and multifold literature which is yet one Book; those "holy writings," (our own Old Testament, from end to end,) which were to them nothing less than the voice of the Holy Spirit. They always put the Lord, in their preaching, in contact with that prediction.

In this, as in other things, His glorious Figure is unique. There is no other personage in human history, himself a moral miracle, heralded by a verifiable foreshadowing in a complex literature of previous centuries.

"The hope of Israel" was, and is, a thing *sui generis*. Other preparations for the Coming were, as it were, sidelong and altogether by means of nature. In the Holy Scriptures the supernatural led directly and in its own way to the supreme supernatural Event; the Sacred Way to the Sanctuary.

What was the burthen of the vast prophecy, with its converging elements? It was **concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.** Whatever the prophets themselves knew, or did not know, of the inmost import of their records and utterances, the import was this. The Lord and the Apostles do not commit us to believe that the old seers ever had a *full* conscious foresight, or even that in all they "wrote of Him" they knew that it was of Him they wrote; though they *had* insights above nature, and knew it, as when David "in the Spirit called Him Lord," and Abraham "saw His day." But they do amply commit us to believe, if we are indeed their disciples, that the whole revelation through Israel did, in a way quite of its own kind, "concern the Son of God." See this in such leading places as Luke xxiv. 25-27; John v. 39, 46; Acts iii. 21-25, x. 43, xxviii. 23.

Ver. 3.

A Mahometan in Southern India, not long ago, was

first drawn to faith in Jesus Christ by reading the genealogy with which St Matthew begins his narrative. Such a procession, he thought, must lead up a mighty name; and he approached with reverence the story of the Nativity. That genealogy is, in a certain sense, the prophecies in compendium. Its avenue is the miniature of theirs. Let us sometimes go back, as it were, and approach the Lord again through the ranks of His holy foretellers, to get a new impression of His majesty.

"*Concerning His Son.*" Around that radiant word, full of light and heat, the cold mists of many speculations have rolled themselves, as man has tried to analyse a divine and boundless fact. For St Paul, and for us, the fact is everything, for peace and life. This Jesus Christ is true Man; that is certain. He is also, if we trust His life and word, true Son of God. He is on the one hand personally distinct from Him whom He calls Father, and whom He loves, and who loves Him with infinite love. On the other hand He is so related to Him that He fully possesses His Nature, while He has that Nature wholly from Him. This is the teaching of Gospels and Epistles; this is the Catholic Faith. Jesus Christ is God, is Divine, truly and fully. He is implicitly called by the incommunicable Name (compare John xii. 41 with Isa. vi. 7). He is openly called God in His own presence on earth (John xx. 28). But what is, if possible, even more significant, because deeper below the surface—He is regarded as the eternally satisfying Object of man's trust and love (*e.g.* Phil. iii. 21, Eph. iii. 19). Yet Jesus Christ is always preached as related Son-wise to Another, so truly that the mutual love of the Two is freely adduced as type and motive for our love.

We can hardly make too much, in thought and

teaching, of this Divine Sonship, this Filial Godhead. It is the very "Secret of God" (Col. ii. 2), both as a light to guide our reason to the foot of the Throne, and as a power upon the heart. "He that hath the Son hath the Father"; "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father"; "He hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His Love."

**Who was born of the seed of David, according to the flesh.** So the New Testament begins (Matt. i. 1); so it almost closes (Rev. xxii. 6). St Paul, in later years, recalls the Lord's human pedigree again (2 Tim. ii. 8): "Remember that Jesus Christ, *of the seed of David*, is risen from the dead." The old Apostle in that last passage, has entered the shadow of death; he feels with one hand for the rock of history, with the other for the pulse of eternal love. Here was the rock; the Lord of life was the Child of history, Son and Heir of a historical king, and then, as such, the Child of prophecy too. And this, against all surface appearances beforehand. The Davidic "ground" (Isa. liii. 2) had seemed to be dry as dust for generations, when the Root of endless life sprang up in it.

"*He was born*" of David's seed. Literally, the Greek may be rendered, "*He became, He came to be.*" Under either rendering we have the wonderful fact that He who in His higher Nature eternally *is*, above time and including it, did in His other Nature, by the door of *becoming*, enter time, and thus indeed "fill all things." This He did, and thus He is, '*according to the flesh.*" "Flesh" is, indeed, but a part of Manhood. But a part can represent the whole; and "flesh" is the part most antithetical to the Divine Nature, with which here Manhood is collocated and in a sense contrasted. So it is again below, ix. 5.

And now, of this blessed Son of David, we hear further:—**who was designated to be Son of God**; literally, "*defined as Son of God*," betokened to be such by "infallible proof." Never for an hour had he ceased to be, in fact, Son of God. To the man healed of birth-blindness He had said (John ix. 35), "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" But there was an hour when He became openly and so to speak officially what He always is naturally; somewhat as a born king is "made" king by coronation. Historical act then affirmed independent fact, and as it were gathered it into a point for use. This affirmation took place **in power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, as a result of resurrection from the dead.** "Sown in weakness," Jesus was indeed "raised in" majestic, tranquil "power." Without an effort He stepped from out of the depth of death, from under the load of sin. It was no flickering life, crucified but not quite killed, creeping back in a convalescence mis-called resurrection; it was the rising of the sun. That it was indeed day-light, and not day-dream, was shown not only in His mastery of matter, but in the transfiguration of His followers. No moral change was ever at once more complete and more perfectly healthful than what His return wrought in that large and various group, when they learnt to say, "We have seen the Lord." The man who wrote this Epistle had "seen Him last of all" (1 Cor. xv. 8). That was indeed a sight "in power," and working a transfiguration.

Ver. 4.

So was the Son of the Father affirmed to be what He is; so was He "made" to be, for us His Church, the Son, in whom we are sons. And all this was, "*according to the Spirit of holiness*"; answerably to the foreshadowing and foretelling of that Holy Spirit who, in the

prophets, "testified of the sufferings destined for the Christ, and of the glories that should follow" (1 Pet. i. 11).

Now lastly, in the Greek of the sentence, as if pausing for a solemn entrance, comes in the whole blessed Name; **even Jesus Christ our Lord.** Word by word the Apostle dictates, and the scribe obeys. JESUS, the human Name; CHRIST, the mystic Title; OUR LORD, the term of royalty and loyalty which binds us to Him, and Him to us. Let those four words be ours for ever. If everything else falls in ruins from the memory, let this remain, "the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever."

Ver. 5. **Through whom,** the Apostle's voice goes on, **we received grace and apostleship.** The Son was the Channel "through" which the Father's choice and call took effect. He "grasped" Paul (Phil. iii. 12), and joined him to Himself, and in Himself to the Father; and now through that Union the motions of the Eternal will move Paul. They move him, to give him "*grace and apostleship*"; that is, in effect, grace for apostleship, and apostleship as grace; the boon of the Lord's presence in him for the work, and the Lord's work as a spiritual boon. He often thus links the word "*grace*" with his great mission; for example, in Gal. ii. 9, Eph. iii. 2, 8, and perhaps Phil. i. 7. Alike the enabling peace and power for service, and then the service itself, are to the Christian a free, loving, beatifying gift.

**Unto obedience of faith among all the Nations.** This "*obedience of faith*" is in fact faith in its aspect as submission. What is faith? It is personal trust, personal self-entrustment to a person. It "gives up the case" to the Lord, as the one only possible Giver of pardon and of purity. It is "*submission* to the righteousness of God" (ch. x. 3). Blessed the man who so

obeys, stretching out arms empty and submissive to receive, in the void between them, Jesus Christ.

"*Among all the Nations*," "all the Gentiles." The words read easy to us, and pass perhaps half unnoticed, as a phrase of routine. Not so to the ex-Pharisee who dictated them here. A few years before he would have held it highly "unlawful to keep company with, or come unto, one of another nation" (Acts x. 2, 8). Now, in Christ, it is as if he had almost forgotten that it had been so. His whole heart, in Christ, is blent in personal love with hearts belonging to many nations; in spiritual affection he is ready for contact with all hearts. And now he, of all the Apostles, is the teacher who by life and word is to bring this glorious catholicity home for ever to all believing souls, our own included. It is St Paul pre-eminently who has taught man, as man, in Christ, to love man; who has made Hebrew, European, Hindoo, Chinese, Caffre, Esquimaux, actually one in the conscious brotherhood of eternal life.

**For His Name's sake**; for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ revealed. The Name is the self-unfolded Person, known and understood. Paul had indeed come to know that Name, and to pass it on was now his very life. He existed only to win for it more insight, more adoration, more love. "The Name" deserved that great soul's entire devotion. Does it not deserve our equally entire devotion now? Our lives shall be transfigured, in their measure, by taking for their motto also, "For His Name's sake."

Now he speaks direct of his Roman friends. **Among whom**, among these multifarious "Nations," **you too are Jesus Christ's called ones**; men who belong to Him, because "*called*" by Him. And what is "*called*"? Compare the places where the word is used

Ver. 6.

—or where its kindred words are used—in the Epistles, and you will find a certain holy speciality of meaning. "Invited" is no adequate paraphrase. The "called" man is the man who has been invited *and has come;* who has obeyed the eternal welcome; to whom the voice of the Lord has been effectual. See the word in the opening paragraphs of 1 Corinthians. There the Gospel is heard, externally, by a host of indifferent or hostile hearts, who think it "folly," or "a stumbling block." But among them are those who hear, and understand, and believe indeed. To them "Christ is God's power, and God's wisdom." And they are "the called."

In the Gospels, the words "chosen" and "called" are in antithesis; the called are many, the chosen few; the external hearers are many, the hearers inwardly are few. In the Epistles a developed use shews the change indicated here, and it is consistently maintained.

**To all who in Rome are God's beloved ones.**

Ver. 7. Wonderful collocation, wonderful possibility! "*Beloved ones of God,*" as close to the eternal heart as it is possible to be, because "in the Beloved"; that is one side. "*In Rome,*" in the capital of universal paganism, material power, iron empire, immeasurable worldliness, flagrant and indescribable sin; that is the other side. "I know where thou dwellest," said the glorified Saviour to much tried disciples at a later day; "even where Satan has his throne" (Rev. ii. 13). That throne was conspicuously present in the Rome of Nero. Yet faith, hope, and love could breathe there, when the Lord "called." They could much more than breathe. This whole Epistle shows that a deep and developed faith, a glorious hope, and the mighty love of a holy life were matters of fact in men and women who every day of the year saw the world as it went

by in forum and basilica, in Suburra and Velabrum, in slave-chambers and in the halls of pleasure where they had to serve or to meet company. The atmosphere of heaven was carried down into that dark pool by the believing souls who were bidden to live there. They lived the heavenly life in Rome; as the creature of the air in our stagnant waters weaves and fills its silver diving-bell, and works and thrives in peace far down.

Read some vivid picture of Roman life, and think of this. See it as it is shown by Tacitus, Suetonius, Juvenal, Martial; or as modern hands, Becker's or Farrar's, have restored it from their materials. What a deadly air for the regenerate soul—deadly not only in its vice, but in its magnificence, and in its thought! But nothing is deadly to the Lord Jesus Christ. The soul's regeneration means not only new ideas and likings, but an eternal Presence, the indwelling of the Life itself. That Life could live at Rome; and therefore "*God's beloved ones in Rome*" could live there also, while it was His will they should be there. The argument comes *a fortiori* to ourselves.

(**His**) **called holy ones**; they were "*called*," in the sense we have seen, and now, by that effectual Voice, drawing them into Christ, they were constituted "*holy ones*," "*saints*." What does that word mean? Whatever its etymology may be,* its usage gives us the thought of dedication to God, connexion with Him, separation to His service, His will. *The saints* are those who belong to Him, His personal property, for His ends. Thus it is used habitually in the Scriptures for *all Christians, supposed to be true to their name.* Not an inner circle,

* The *linguistic root* seems to point directly not to separation (as often said) but to worship, reverence.

but all, bear the title. It is not only a glorified aristocracy, but the believing commonalty; not the stars of the eternal sky but the flowers sown by the Lord in the common field; even in such a tract of that field as "Cæsar's household" was (Phil. iv. 22).

Habitually therefore the Apostle gives the term "*saints*" to whole communities; as if baptism always gave, or sealed, saintship. In a sense it did, and does. But then, this was, and is, on the assumption of the concurrence of possession with title. The title left the individual still bound to "examine himself, whether *he was* in the faith" (2 Cor. xiii. 5).

These happy residents at Rome are now greeted and blessed in their Father's and Saviour's Name; **Grace to you and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.** "*Grace*"; what is it? Two ideas lie there together; favour and gratuity. The grace of God is His favouring will and work for us, and in us; gratuitous, utterly and to the end unearned. Put otherwise, (and with the remembrance that His great gifts are but modes of Himself, are in fact Himself in will and action,) grace is God for us, grace is God in us, sovereign, willing, kind. "*Peace*"; what is it? The holy repose within, and so around, which comes of the man's acceptance with God and abode in God; an "all is well" in the heart, and in the believer's contact with circumstances, as he rests in his Father and his Redeemer. "Peace, perfect peace"; under the sense of demerit, and amidst the crush of duties, and on the crossing currents of human joy and sorrow, and in the mystery of death; because of the God of Peace, who has made peace for us through the Cross of His Son, and is peace in us, "by the Spirit which He hath given us."

## CHAPTER III

### *GOOD REPORT OF THE ROMAN CHURCH: PAUL NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL*

ROMANS i. 8-17

HE has blessed the Roman Christians in the name of the Lord. Now he hastens to tell them how he blesses God for them, and how full his heart is of them. The Gospel is warm all through with life and love; this great message of doctrine and precept is poured from a fountain full of personal affection.

Ver. 8. **Now first I thank my God, through Jesus Christ, about you all.** It is his delight to give thanks for all the good he knows of in his brethren. Seven of his Epistles open with such thanksgivings, which at once convey the commendations which love rejoices to give, wherever possible, and trace all spiritual virtue straight to its Source, the Lord. Nor only here to "the Lord," but to "*my* God"; a phrase used, in the New Testament, only by St Paul, except that one utterance of ELI, ELI, by his dying Saviour. It is the expression of an indescribable appropriation and reverent intimacy. The believer grudges his God to none; he rejoices with great joy over every soul that finds its wealth in Him. But at the centre of all joy and love is this—"*my* God"; "Christ Jesus *my* Lord"; "who loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*."

Is it selfish? Nay, it is the language of a personality where Christ has dethroned self in His own favour, but in which therefore reigns now the highest happiness, the happiness which animates and maintains a self-forgetful love of all. And this holy intimacy, with its action in thanks and petition, is all the while "*through Jesus Christ*," the Mediator and Brother. The man knows God as "*my* God," and deals with Him as such, never out of that Beloved Son who is equally One with the believer and with the Father, no alien medium, but the living point of unity.

What moves his thanksgivings? **Because your faith is spoken of**, more literally, **is carried as tidings, over the whole world**. Go where he will, in Asia, in Macedonia, in Achaia, in Illyricum, he meets believing "strangers from Rome," with spiritual news from the Capital, announcing, with a glad solemnity, that at the great Centre of this world the things eternal are proving their power, and that the Roman mission is remarkable for its strength and simplicity of "*faith*," its humble reliance on the Lord Jesus Christ, and loving allegiance to Him. Such news, wafted from point to point of that early Christendom, was frequent then; we see another beautiful example of it where he tells the Thessalonians (1 Thess. i. 8-10) how everywhere in his Greek tour he found the news of their conversion running in advance of him, to greet him at each arrival. What special importance would such intelligence bear when it was good news from Rome!

Still in our day over the world of Missions similar tidings travel. Only a few years ago "the saints" of Indian Tinnevelly heard of the distress of their brethren of African Uganda, and sent with loving eagerness "to their necessity." Only last year (1892) an English

visitor to the Missions of Labrador found the disciples of the Moravian Brethren there full of the wonders of grace manifested in those same African believers.

This constant good tidings from the City makes him the more glad because of its correspondence with his incessant thought, prayer, and yearning over them.

Ver. 9. **For God is my record, my witness,*** of this; the God **whom I serve,** at once, so the Greek (λατρεύω) implies, with adoration and obedience, **in my spirit, in the Gospel of His Son.** The "*for*" gives the connexion we have just indicated; he rejoices to hear of their faith, *for* the Lord knows how much they are in his prayers. The divine Witness is the more instinctively appealed to, because these thoughts and prayers are for a mission-Church, and the relations between St Paul and his God are above all missionary relations. He "*serves Him in the Gospel of His Son,*" the Gospel of the God who is known and believed in His Christ. He "serves Him in *the Gospel*"; that is, in *the propagation* of it. So he often means, where he speaks of "the Gospel"; take for example ver. 1 above; xv. 16, 19 below; Phil. i. 5, 12; ii. 22. "He serves Him," in that great branch of ministry, "*in his spirit,*" with his whole love, will, and mind, working in communion with his Lord. And now to this eternal Friend and Witness he appeals to seal his assurance of incessant intercessions for them; **how without ceasing,** as a habit constantly in action, **I make mention of you,** calling them up by name, specifying before the Father Rome, and Aquila, and Andronicus, and Junias, and Persis, and Mary, and the whole circle, personally known or not, **in my prayers**; literally, **on occasion of**

* The word "*record*" in this sense came into English from Old French. (Skeat: *Etymological Dictionary.*)

**my prayers**; whenever he found himself at prayer, statedly or as it were casually remembering and beseeching.

The prayers of St Paul are a study by themselves. See his own accounts of them, to the Corinthians, the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, the Thessalonians, and Philemon. Observe their topic; it is almost always the growth of grace in the saints, to their Master's glory. Observe now still more their manner; the frequency, the diligence, the resolution which grapples, wrestles, with the difficulties of prayer, so that in Col. ii. 1 he calls his prayer simply "*a great wrestling*." Learn here how to deal with God for those for whom you work, shepherd of souls, messenger of the Word, Christian man or woman who in any way are called to help other hearts in Christ.

In this case his prayers have a very definite direction;

Ver. 10. he is **requesting, if somehow, now at length, my way shall be opened, in the will of God, to come to you.**

It is a quite simple, quite natural petition. His inward harmony with the Lord's will never excludes the formation and expression of such requests, with the reverent "*if*" of submissive reserve. The "indifference" of mystic pietism, which at least discourages articulate contingent petitions, is unknown to the Apostles; "in everything, with thanksgiving, they make their requests known unto God." And they find such expression harmonized, in a holy experience, with a profound rest "*within* this will," this "sweet beloved will of God." Little did he here foresee *how* his way would be opened; that it would lie through the tumult in the Temple, the prisons of Jerusalem and Cæsarea, and the cyclone of the Adrian sea. He had in view a missionary journey to Spain, in which Rome was to be taken by the way.

"So God grants prayer, but in His love
Makes ways and times His own."

His heart yearns for this Roman visit. We may almost render the Greek of the next clause, **For I**
Ver. 11. **am homesick for a sight of you**; he uses the word by which elsewhere he describes Philippian Epaphroditus' longing to be back at Philippi (Phil. ii. 26), and again his own longing to see the son of his heart, Timotheus (2 Tim. i. 4). Such is the Gospel, that its family affection throws the light of home on even unknown regions where dwell "the brethren." In this case the longing love however has a purpose most practical; **that I may impart to you some spiritual gift of grace, with a view to your establishment.** The word rendered "*gift of grace*" (χάρισμα) is used in some places (see especially 1 Cor. xii. 4, 9, 28, 30, 31) with a certain special reference to the mysterious "Tongues," "Interpretations," and "Prophecies," given in the primeval Churches. And we gather from the Acts and the Epistles that these grants were not ordinarily made where an Apostle was not there to lay on his hands. But it is not likely that this is the import of this present passage. Elsewhere in the Epistle * the word *charisma* is used with its largest and deepest reference; God's gift of blessing in Christ. Here then, so we take it, he means that he pines to convey to them, as his Lord's messenger, some new development of spiritual light and joy; to expound "the Way" to them more perfectly; to open up

* See verses 15, 16, 23, xi. 29. xii. 6 is the only passage which at all looks the other way, and that passage implies that the Romans *already* possessed the wonder-working gifts.

to them such fuller and deeper insights into the riches of Christ that they, better using their possession of the Lord, might as it were gain new possessions in Him, and might stand more boldly on the glorious certainties they held. And this was to be done ministerially, not magisterially. For he goes on to say that the longed-for visit would be his gain as well as theirs; **that is, with a view to my concurrent encouragement among you, by our mutual faith, yours and mine together.** Shall we call this a sentence of fine tact; beautifully conciliatory and endearing? Yes, but it is also perfectly sincere. True tact is only the skill of sympathetic love, not the less genuine in its thought because that thought seeks to please and win. He is glad to shew himself as his disciples' brotherly friend; but then he first *is* such, and enjoys the character, and has continually found and felt his own soul made glad and strong by the witness to the Lord which far less gifted believers bore, as he and they talked together. Does not every true teacher know this in his own experience? If we are not merely lecturers on Christianity but witnesses for Christ, we know what it is to hail with deep thanksgivings the "*encouragement*" we have had from the lips of those who perhaps believed long after we did, and have been far less advantaged outwardly than we have been. We have known and blessed the "*encouragement*" carried to us by little believing children, and young men in their first faith, and poor old people on their comfortless beds, ignorant in this world, illuminated in the Lord. "*Mutual faith*," the pregnant phrase of the Apostle, faith residing in each of both parties, and owned by

Ver. 12.

each to the other, is a mighty power for Christian "*encouragement*" still.*

Ver. 13. **But I would not have you ignorant, brethren.** This is a characteristic term of expression with him.† He delights in confidence and information, and not least about his own plans bearing on his friends. **That often I purposed** (or better, in our English idiom, **have purposed**) **to come to you, (but I have been hindered up till now,) that I might have some fruit among you too, as actually among the other Nations.** He cannot help giving more and yet more intimation of his loving *gravitation* towards them ; nor yet of his gracious avarice for "*fruit*," result, harvest and vintage for Christ, in the way of helping on Romans, as well as Asiatics, and Macedonians, and Achaians, to live a fuller life in Him. This, we may infer from the whole Epistle, would be the chief kind of "fruit" in his view at Rome ; but not this only. For we shall see him at once go on to anticipate an evangelistic work at Rome, a speaking of the Gospel message where there would be a temptation to be "ashamed" of it. Edification of believers may be his main aim. But conversion of pagan souls to God cannot possibly be dissociated from it.

In passing we see, with instruction, that St Paul made many plans which came to nothing ; he tells us this here without apology or misgiving. He claims accordingly no such practical omniscience, actual or possible, as would make his resolutions and forecasts infallible. Tacitly, at least, he wrote "*If the Lord*

* The word "*comfort*" in the English Version here, as commonly elsewhere, represents παρακαλεῖν, παράκλησις, which commonly denote not so much the consolation of grief as the encouragement which banishes depression.

† xi. 25 ; 1 Cor. x. 1, xii. 1 ; 2 Cor. i. 8 ; 1 Thess. iv. 13.

*will*," across them all, unless indeed there came a case where, as when he was guided out of Asia to Macedonia (Acts xvi. 6-10), direct intimation was given him, abnormal, supernatural, quite *ab extra*, that such and not such was to be his path.

But now, he is not only "*homesick*" for Rome, with a yearning love; he feels his obligation to Rome, with a wakeful conscience. Ver. 14. **Alike to Greeks and to Barbarians, to wise men and to unthinking, I am in debt.** Mankind is on his heart, in the sorts and differences of its culture. On the one hand were "*the Greeks*"; that is to say, in the then popular meaning of the word, the peoples possessed of what we now call "classical" civilization, Greek and Roman; an inner circle of these were "*the wise*," the literati, the readers, writers, thinkers, in the curriculum of those literatures and philosophies. On the other hand were "*the Barbarians*," the tongues and tribes outside the Hellenic pale, Pisidian, Pamphylian, Galatian, Illyrian, and we know not who besides; and then, among them, or anywhere, "*the unthinking*," the numberless masses whom the educated would despise or forget as utterly untrained in the schools, unversed in the great topics of man and the world; the people of the field, the market, and the kitchen. To the Apostle, because to his Lord, all these were now impartially his claimants, his creditors; he "*owed them*" the Gospel which had been trusted to him for them. Naturally, his will might be repelled alike by the frown or smile of the Greek, and by the coarse earthliness of the Barbarian. But supernaturally, in Christ, he loved both, and scrupulously remembered his *duty* to both. Such is the true missionary spirit still, in whatever region, under whatever conditions. The Christian

man, and the Christian Church, delivered from the world, is yet its debtor. "Woe is to him, to it, if" that debt is not paid, if that Gospel is "hidden in a napkin."

Thus he is ready, and more than ready, to pay his debt to Rome. **So** (to render literally) **what relates to me is eager, to you too, to the men in Rome, to preach the Gospel.** Ver. 15. "*What relates to* me"; there is an emphasis on "*me*," as if to say that the hindrance, whatever it is, is not in him, but around him. The doors have been shut, but the man stands behind them, in act to pass in when he may.

His eagerness is no light-heartedness, no carelessness of when or where. This wonderful missionary is too sensitive to facts and ideas, too rich in imagination, not to feel the peculiar, nay the awful greatness, of a summons to Rome. He understands culture too well not to feel its possible obstacles. He has seen too much of both the real grandeur and the harsh force of the imperial power in its extension not to feel a genuine awe as he thinks of meeting that power at its gigantic Centre. There is that in him which fears Rome. But he is therefore the very man to go there, for he understands the magnitude of the occasion, and he will the more deeply retire upon his Lord for peace and power.

Thus with a pointed fitness he tells himself and his friends, just here, that he is "*not ashamed of the Gospel*."

**For I am not ashamed**; I am ready even for Rome, for this terrible Rome. I have a message which, though Rome looks as if she must despise it, I know is not to be despised. **For I am not ashamed of the Gospel**; * **for it is God's power to salvation, for** Ver. 16.

* The words "*of Christ*" must be omitted from the text here.

every one who believes, alike for Jew, (first,) and for Greek. For God's righteousness is in it unveiled,
Ver. 17. from faith on to faith; as it stands written, But the just man on faith shall live.

These words give out the great theme of the Epistle. The Epistle, therefore, is infinitely the best commentary on them, as we follow out its argument and hear its message. Here it shall suffice us to note only a point or two, and so pass on.

First, we recollect that this Gospel, this Glad Tidings, is, in its essence, Jesus Christ. It is, supremely, "He, not it"; Person, not theory. Or rather, it is authentic and eternal theory in vital and eternal connexion everywhere with a Person. As such it is truly "*power*," in a sense as profoundly natural as it is divine. It is power, not only in the cogency of perfect principle, but in the energy of an eternal Life, an almighty Will, an infinite Love.

Then, we observe that this message of power, which is, in its burthen, the Christ of God, unfolds first, at its foundation, in its front, "*the Righteousness of God*"; not first His Love, but "His Righteousness." Seven times elsewhere in the Epistle comes this phrase *; rich materials for ascertaining its meaning in the spiritual dialect of St Paul. Out of these passages, iii. 26 gives us the key. There "the righteousness of God," seen as it were in action, ascertained by its effects, is that which secures "*that He shall be just, and the Justifier of the man who belongs to faith in Jesus*." It is that which makes wonderfully possible the mighty paradox that the Holy One, eternally truthful, eternally rightful, infinitely "law-abiding" in His jealousy for that Law which is

* iii. 5, 21, 22, 23, 26; x. 3 twice.

in fact His Nature expressing itself in precept, nevertheless can and does say to man, in his guilt and forfeit, "I, thy Judge, lawfully acquit thee, lawfully accept thee, lawfully embrace thee." In such a context we need not fear to explain this great phrase, in this its first occurrence, to mean the Acceptance accorded by the Holy Judge to sinful man. Thus it stands practically equivalent to—God's way of justifying the ungodly, His method for liberating His love while He magnifies His law. In effect, not as a translation but as an explanation, God's Righteousness is God's Justification.

Then again, we note the emphasis and the repetition here of the thought of *faith*. "*To every one that believeth*"; "*From faith on to faith*"; "*The just man on faith shall live.*" Here, if anywhere, we shall find ample commentary in the Epistle. Only let us remember from the first that in the Roman Epistle, as everywhere in the New Testament, we shall see "*faith*" used in its natural and human sense; we shall find that it means personal reliance. *Fides est fiducia*, "Faith is trust," say the masters of Reformation theology. *Refellitur inanis hæreticorum fiducia*, "We refute the heretics' empty 'trust,'" says the Council of Trent* against them; but in vain. Faith is trust. It is in this sense that our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Gospels, invariably uses the word. For this is its human sense, its sense in the street and market; and the Lord, the Man of men, uses the dialect of His race. Faith, infinitely wonderful and mysterious from some points of view, is the simplest thing in the world from others. That sinners, conscious of their guilt, should be brought so to see their Judge's

* Session VI., ch. ix.

heart as to take His word of peace to mean what it says, is miracle. But that they should trust His word, having seen His heart, is nature, illuminated and led by grace, but nature still. The "*faith*" of Jesus Christ and the Apostles is trust. It is not a faculty for mystical intuitions. It is our taking the Trustworthy at His word. It is the opening of a mendicant hand to receive the gold of Heaven; the opening of dying lips to receive the water of life. It is that which makes a void place for Jesus Christ to fill, that He may be man's Merit, man's Peace, and man's Power.

Hence the overwhelming prominence of faith in the Gospel. It is the correlative of the overwhelming, the absolute, prominence of Jesus Christ. Christ is all. Faith is man's acceptance of Him as such. "Justification by Faith" is not acceptance because faith is a valuable thing, a merit, a recommendation, a virtue.* It is acceptance because of Jesus Christ, whom man, dropping all other hopes, receives. It is, let us repeat it, the sinner's empty hand and parted lips. It has absolutely nothing to do with earning the gift of God, the water and the bread of God; it has all to do with taking it. This we shall see open out before us as we proceed.

So the Gospel "*unveils God's righteousness*"; it draws the curtains from His glorious secret. And as each fold is lifted, the glad beholder looks on "*from faith to faith.*" He finds that this reliance is to be *his* part; first, last, midst, and without end. He takes Jesus Christ by faith; he holds Him by faith; he uses Him by faith; he lives, he dies, in Him by faith; that

* See this admirably explained by Hooker, *Discourse of Justification*, § 31.

is to say, always by Him, by Him received, held, used.

Then lastly, we mark the quotation from the Prophet, who, for the Apostle, is the organ of the Holy Ghost. What Habakkuk wrote is, for Paul, what God says, God's Word. The Prophet, as we refer to his brief pages, manifestly finds his occasion and his first significance in the then state of his country and his people. If we please, we may explain the words as a patriot's contribution to the politics of Jerusalem, and pass on. But if so, we pass on upon a road unknown to our Lord and His Apostles. To Him, to them, the prophecies had more in them than the Prophets knew; and Habakkuk's appeal to Judah to retain the Lord Jehovah among them in all His peace and power, by trusting Him, is known by St Paul to be for all time an oracle about the work of faith. So he sees it in a message straight to the soul which asks how, if Christ is God's Righteousness, shall I, a sinner, win Christ for me. "Wouldst thou indeed be *just* with God, right with Him as Judge, accepted by the Holy One? Take His Son in the empty arms of mere trust, and He is thine for this need, and for all."

"*I am not ashamed of the Gospel.*" So the Apostle affirms, as he looks toward Rome. What is it about this Gospel of God, and of His Son, which gives occasion for such a word? Why do we find, not here only, but elsewhere in the New Testament, this contemplated possibility that the Christian may be ashamed of his creed, and of his Lord? "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me, and of My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed" (Luke ix. 26); "Be not thou ashamed of the testimony of our Lord"; "Nevertheless, I am not ashamed" (2 Tim. i. 8, 12). This

is paradoxical, as we come to think upon it. There is much about the purity of the Gospel which might occasion, and does too often occasion, an awe and dread of it, seemingly reasonable. There is much about its attendant mysteries which might seem to excuse an attitude, however mistaken, of reverent suspense. But what is there about this revelation of the heart of Eternal Love, this record of a Life equally divine and human, of a Death as majestic as it is infinitely pathetic, and then of a Resurrection out of death, to occasion shame? Why, in view of this, should man be shy to avow his faith, and to let it be known that this is all in all to him, his life, his peace, his strength, his surpassing interest and occupation?

More than one analysis of the phenomenon, which we all know to be fact, may be suggested. But for our part we believe that the true solution lies near the words sin, pardon, self-surrender. The Gospel reveals the eternal Love, but under conditions which remind man that he has done his worst to forfeit it. It tells him of a peace and strength sublime and heavenly; but it asks him, in order to receive them, to kneel down in the dust and take them, unmerited, for nothing. And it reminds them that he, thus delivered and endowed, is by the same act the property of his Deliverer; that not only the highest benefit of his nature is secured by his giving himself over to God, but the most inexorable obligation lies on him to do so. He is not his own, but bought with a price.

Such views of the actual relation between man and God, even when attended, as they are in the Gospel, with such indications of man's true greatness as are found nowhere else, are deeply repellent to the soul that has not yet seen itself and God in the light of

truth. And the human being who *has* got that sight, and has submitted himself indeed, yet, the moment he looks outside the blessed shrine of his own union with his Lord, is tempted to be reticent about a creed which he knows once repelled and angered him. Well did Paul remember his old hatred and contempt; and he felt the temptations of that memory, when he presented Christ either to the Pharisee or to the Stoic, and now particularly when he thought of "bearing witness of Him at Rome" (Acts xxiii. 11), imperial, overwhelming Rome. But then he looked again from them to Jesus Christ, and the temptation was beneath his feet, and the Gospel, everywhere, was upon his lips.

## CHAPTER IV

### *NEED FOR THE GOSPEL: GOD'S ANGER AND MAN'S SIN*

ROMANS i. 18-23

WE have as it were touched the heart of the Apostle as he weighs the prospect of his Roman visit, and feels, almost in one sensation, the tender and powerful attraction, the solemn duty, and the strange solicitation to shrink from the deliverance of his message. Now his lifted forehead, just lighted up by the radiant truth of Righteousness by Faith, is shadowed suddenly. He is not ashamed of the Gospel; he will speak it out, if need be, in the Cæsar's own presence, and in that of his brilliant and cynical court. For there is a pressing, an awful need that he should thus "despise the shame." The very conditions in human life which occasion an instinctive tendency to be reticent of the Gospel, are facts of dreadful urgency and peril. Man does not like to be exposed to himself, and to be summoned to the faith and surrender claimed by Christ. But man, whatever he likes or dislikes, is a sinner, exposed to the eyes of the All-Pure, and lying helpless, amidst all his dreams of pride, beneath the wrath of God. Such is the logic of this stern sequel to the affirmation, "*I am not ashamed.*"

Ver. 18. **For God's wrath is revealed, from heaven, upon all godlessness and unrighteousness of men who in unrighteousness hold down the truth.** "*God's wrath*

*is revealed*"; Revealed in "the holy Scriptures," in every history, by every Prophet, by every Psalmist; this perhaps is the main bearing of his thought. But revealed also antecedently and concurrently in that mysterious, inalienable conscience, which is more truly part of man than his five senses. Conscience *sees* that there is an eternal difference between right and wrong, and *feels*, in the dark, the relation of that difference to a law, a Lawgiver, and a doom. Conscience is aware of a fiery light beyond the veil. Revelation meets its wistful gaze, lifts the veil, and affirms the fact of the wrath of God, and of His judgment coming.

Let us not shun that "revelation." It is not the Gospel. The Gospel, as we have seen, is in itself one pure warm light of life and love. But then it can never be fully understood until, sooner or later, we have seen something, and believed something, of the truth of the anger of the Holy One. From our idea of that anger let us utterly banish every thought of impatience, of haste, of what is arbitrary, of what is in the faintest degree unjust, inequitable. It is the anger of Him who never for a moment can be untrue to Himself; and He is Love, and is Light. But He is also, so also says His Word, consuming Fire (Heb. x. 31, xii. 29); and it is "a fearful thing to fall into His hands." Nowhere and never is God not Love, as the Maker and Preserver of His creatures. But nowhere also and never is He not Fire, as the judicial Adversary of evil, the Antagonist of the will that chooses sin. Is there "nothing in God to fear"? "Yea," says His Son (Luke xii. 5), "I say unto you, fear Him."

At the present time there is a deep and almost ubiquitous tendency to ignore the revelation of the wrath of God. No doubt there have been times, and

quarters, in the story of Christianity, when that revelation was thrown into disproportionate prominence, and men shrank from Christ (so Luther tells us he did in his youth) as from One who was nothing if not the inexorable Judge. They saw Him habitually as He is seen in the vast Fresco of the Sistine Chapel, a sort of Jupiter Tonans, casting His foes for ever from His presence; a Being *from* whom, not *to* whom, the guilty soul must fly. But the reaction from such thoughts, at present upon us, has swung to an extreme indeed, until the tendency of the pulpit, and of the exposition, is to say practically that there is nothing in God to be afraid of; that the words hope and love are enough to neutralize the most awful murmurs of conscience, and to cancel the plainest warnings of the loving Lord Himself. Yet that Lord, as we ponder His words in all the four Gospels, so far from speaking such "peace" as this, seems to reserve it to Himself, rather than to His messengers, to utter the most formidable warnings. And the earliest literature which follows the New Testament shows that few of His sayings had sunk deeper into His disciples' souls than those which told them of the two Ways and of the two Ends.

Let us go to Him, the all-benignant Friend and Teacher, to learn the true attitude of thought towards Him as "the Judge, strong and patient," "but who will in no wise clear the guilty" by unsaying His precepts and putting by His threats. He assuredly will teach us, in this matter, no lessons of hard and narrow denunciation, nor encourage us to sit in judgment on the souls and minds of our brethren. But He will teach us to take deep and awful views for ourselves of both the pollution and also *the guilt* of sin. He will constrain us to carry those views all through our personal

theology, and our personal anthropology too. He will make it both a duty and a possibility for us, in right measure, in right manner, tenderly, humbly, governed by His Word, to let others know what our convictions are about the Ways and the Ends. And thus, as well as otherwise, He will make His Gospel to be to us no mere luxury or ornament of thought and life, as it were a decorous gilding upon essential worldliness and the ways of self. He will unfold it as the soul's refuge and its home. From Himself as Judge He will draw us in blessed flight to Himself as Propitiation and Peace. "*From Thy wrath, and from everlasting condemnation, Good Lord*—Thyself—*deliver us.*"

This wrath, holy, passionless, yet awfully personal, "*is revealed, from heaven.*" That is to say it is revealed as coming from heaven, when the righteous Judge "shall be revealed from heaven, taking vengeance" (2 Thess. i. 7, 8). In that pure upper world He sits whose wrath it is. From that stainless sky of His presence its white lightnings will fall, "*upon all godlessness and unrighteousness of men,*" upon every kind of violation of conscience, whether done against God or man; upon "*godlessness,*" which blasphemes, denies, or ignores the Creator; upon "*unrighteousness,*" which wrests the claims whether of Creator or of creature. Awful opposites to the "two great Commandments of the Law"! The Law must be utterly vindicated upon them at last. Conscience must be eternally verified at last, against all the wretched suppressions of it that man has ever tried.

For the men in question "*hold down the truth in unrighteousness.*" The rendering "*hold down*" is certified by both etymology and context; the only possible other rendering, "*hold fast,*" is negatived by

the connexion. The thought given us is that man, fallen from the harmony with God in which Manhood was made, but still keeping manhood, and therefore conscience, is never naturally ignorant of the difference between right and wrong, never naturally, innocently, unaware that he is accountable. On the other hand he is never fully willing, of himself, to do all he knows of right, all he knows he ought, all the demand of the righteous law above him. "*In unrighteousness*," in a life which at best is not wholly and cordially with the will of God, "*he holds down the truth*," silences the haunting fact that there is a claim he will not meet, a will he ought to love, but to which he prefers his own. The majesty of eternal right, always intimating the majesty of an eternal Righteous One, he thrusts below his consciousness, or into a corner of it, and keeps it there, that he may follow his own way. More or less, it wrestles with him for its proper place. And its even half-understood efforts may, and often do, exercise a deterrent force upon the energies of his self-will. But they do not dislodge it; he would rather have his way. With a force sometimes deliberate, sometimes impulsive, sometimes habitual, "*he holds down*" the unwelcome monitor.

Deep is the moral responsibility incurred by such repression. For man has always, by the very state of the case, within him and around him, evidence for a personal righteous Power "with Whom he has to do." **Because that which is known of God is manifest in them;** Ver. 19. **for God manifested** (or rather, perhaps, in our idiom, **has manifested**) **it to them.** "*That which is known*"; that is, practically, "*that which is knowable, that which may be known.*" There is that about the Eternal which indeed neither is nor can be known,

with the knowledge of mental comprehension. "Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?" All thoughtful Christians are in this respect agnostics that they gaze on the bright Ocean of Deity, and know that they do not know it in its fathomless but radiant depths, nor can explore its expanse which has no shore. They rest before absolute mystery with a repose as simple (if possible more simple) as that with which they contemplate the most familiar and intelligible event. But this is not not to know Him. It leaves man quite as free to be sure that He is, to be as certain that He is Personal, and is Holy, as man is certain of his own consciousness, and conscience.

That there is Personality behind phenomena, and that this great Personality is righteous, St Paul here affirms to be "*manifest*," disclosed, visible, "*in men*." It is a fact present, however partially apprehended, in human consciousness. And more, this consciousness is itself part of the fact; indeed it is that part without which all others would be as nothing. To man without conscience—really, naturally, innocently without conscience—and without ideas of causation, the whole majesty of the Universe might be unfolded with a fulness beyond all our present experience; but it would say absolutely nothing of either Personality or Judgment. It is by the world within that we are able in the least degree to apprehend the world without. But having, naturally and inalienably, the world of personality and of conscience within us, we are beings to whom God can manifest, and **has manifested, the knowable about Himself**, in His universe.

Ver. 20. **For His things unseen, ever since the creation of the universe, are full in (man's) view, presented to (man's) mind by His things made—His ever-**

**lasting power and Godlikeness together—so as to leave them inexcusable.** Since the ordered world was, and since man was, as its observer and also as its integral part, there has been present to man's spirit—supposed true to its own creation—adequate testimony around him, taken along with that within him, to evince the reality of a supreme and persistent Will, intending order, and thus intimating Its own correspondence to conscience, and expressing Itself in "things made" of such manifold glory and wonder as to intimate the Maker's majesty as well as righteousness. What is That, what is He, to whom the splendours of the day and the night, the wonders of the forest and the sea, bear witness? He is not only righteous Judge but King eternal. He is not only charged with my guidance; He has rights illimitable over me. I am wrong altogether if I am not in submissive harmony with Him; if I do not surrender, and adore.

Thus it has been, according to St. Paul, "*ever since the creation of the universe*" (and of man in it). And such everywhere is the Theism of Scripture. It maintains, or rather it states as certainty, that man's knowledge of God began with his being as man. To see the Maker in His works is not, according to the Holy Scriptures, only the slow and difficult issue of a long evolution which led through far lower forms of thought, the fetish, the nature-power, the tribal god, the national god, to the idea of a Supreme. Scripture presents man as made in the image of the Supreme, and capable from the first of a true however faint apprehension of Him. It assures us that man's lower and distorted views of nature and of personal power behind it are degenerations, perversions, issues of a mysterious primeval dislocation of man from his

harmony with God. The believer in the holy Scriptures, in the sense in which our Lord and the Apostles believed in them, will receive this view of the primeval history of Theism as a true report of God's account of it. Remembering that it concerns an otherwise unknown moment of human spiritual history, he will not be disturbed by alleged evidence against it from lower down the stream. Meanwhile he will note the fact that among the foremost students of Nature in our time there are those who affirm the rightness of such an attitude. It is not lightly that the Duke of Argyll writes words like these :—

"I doubt (to say the truth, I disbelieve) that we shall ever come to know by science anything more than we now know about the origin of man. I believe we shall always have to rest on that magnificent and sublime outline which has been given us by the great Prophet of the Jews."*

So man, being what he is and seeing what he sees, is "without excuse": **Because, knowing God, they did not**
Ver. 21. **glorify Him as God, nor thank Him, but proved futile in their ways of thinking, and their unintelligent heart was darkened. Asserting themselves**
Ver. 22. **for wise they turned fools, and transmuted the glory of the immortal God in a semblance of the likeness of mortal man, and of things winged, quadruped, and reptile.** Man, placed by God in His universe, and himself made in God's image, naturally and inevitably "*knew God.*" Not necessarily in that inner sense of spiritual harmony and union which is (John xvii. 3) the life eternal; but in the sense of a perception of His being and His character

* *Geology and the Deluge*, p. 46 (Glasgow, 1885).

adequate, at its faintest, to make a moral claim. But somehow—a somehow which has to do with a revolt of man's will from God to self—that claim was, and is, disliked. Out of that dislike has sprung, in man's spiritual history, a reserve towards God, a tendency to question His purpose, His character, His existence; or otherwise, to degrade the conception of Personality behind phenomena into forms from which the multifold monster of idolatry has sprung, as if phenomena were due to personalities no better and no greater than could be imaged by man or by beast, things of limit and of passion; at their greatest terrible, but not holy; not ultimate; not One.

Man has spent on these unworthy "ways of thinking" a great deal of weak and dull reasoning and imbecile imagination, but also some of the rarest and most splendid of the riches of his mind, made in the image of God. But all this thinking, because conditioned by a wrong attitude of his being as a whole, has had "*futile*" issues, and has been in the truest sense "*unintelligent*," failing to see inferences aright and as a whole. It has been a struggle "*in the dark*"; yea, a descent from the light into moral and mental "*folly*."

Was it not so, is not so still? If man is indeed made in the image of the living Creator, a moral personality, and placed in the midst of "the myriad world, His shadow," then whatever process of thought leads man away from Him has somewhere in it a fallacy unspeakable, and inexcusable. It must mean that something in him which should be awake is dormant; or, yet worse, that something in him which should be in faultless tune, as the Creator tempered it, is all unstrung; something that should be nobly free to love and to adore is being repressed, "held down." Then

only does man fully think aright when he *is* aright. Then only is he aright when he, made by and for the Eternal Holy One, rests willingly in Him, and lives for Him. "The fear of the Lord is," in the strictest fact, "the beginning of wisdom"; for it is that attitude of man without which the creature cannot "answer the idea" of the Creator, and therefore cannot truly follow out the law of its own being.

"Let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Him" (Jer. ix. 24) who necessarily and eternally transcends our cognition and comprehension, yet can be known, can be touched, clasped, adored, as personal, eternal, almighty, holy Love.

## CHAPTER V

### *MAN GIVEN UP TO HIS OWN WAY: THE HEATHEN*

ROMANS i. 24-32

Ver. 24. **Wherefore God gave them up, in the desires of their hearts, to uncleanness, so as to dishonour their bodies among themselves.**

There is a dark sequence, in the logic of facts, between unworthy thoughts of God and the development of the basest forms of human wrong. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God :—they are corrupt, and have done abominable works" (Psal. xiv. 1). And the folly which does not indeed deny God but degrades His Idea, always gives its sure contribution to such corruption. It is so in the nature of the case. The individual atheist, or polytheist, may conceivably be a virtuous person, on the human standard; but if he is so it is not because of his creed. Let his creed become a real formative power in human society, and it will tend inevitably to moral disease and death. Is man indeed a moral personality, made in the image of a holy and almighty Maker? Then the vital air of his moral life must be fidelity, correspondence, to his God. Let man think of Him as less than All, and he will think of himself less worthily; not less proudly perhaps, but less worthily, because not in his true and wonderful relation to the Eternal Good. Wrong in himself will tend surely

to seem less awful, and right less necessary and great. And nothing, literally nothing, from any region higher than himself—himself already lowered in his own thought from his true idea—can ever come in to supply the blank where God should be, but is not. Man may worship himself, or may despise himself, when he has ceased to "glorify God and thank Him"; but he cannot for one hour be what he was made to be, the son of God in the universe of God. To know God indeed is to be secured from self-worship, and to be taught self-reverence; and it is the only way to those two secrets in their pure fulness.

"*God gave them up.*" So the Scripture says elsewhere. "So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts" (Psal. lxxxi. 12); "God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven" (Acts vii. 42); "God gave them up to passions of degradation"; "God gave them over to an abandoned mind"; (below, verses 26, 28). It is a dire thought; but the inmost conscience, once awake, affirms the righteousness of the thing. From one point of view it is just the working out of a natural process, in which sin is at once exposed and punished by its proper results, without the slightest injection, so to speak, of any force beyond its own terrible gravitation towards the sinner's misery. But from another point it is the personally allotted, and personally inflicted, retribution of Him who hates iniquity with the antagonism of infinite Personality. *He* has so constituted natural process that wrong gravitates to wretchedness; and *He* is in that process, and above it, always and for ever.

So He "*gave them up, in their desires of their hearts*"; He left them there where they had placed themselves, "in" the fatal region of self-will, self-indulgence; "*unto*

*uncleanness*," described now with terrible explicitness in its full outcome, "*to dishonour their bodies*," the intended temples of the Creator's presence, "*among themselves*," or "*in themselves*"; for the possible dishonour might be done either in a foul solitude, or in a fouler society and mutuality: **Seeing that they perverted the truth of God**, the eternal fact of His glory and claim, **in their** (τῷ) **lie**, so that it was travestied, misrepresented, lost, "in" the falsehood of polytheism and idols; **and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.** He casts this strong Doxology into the thick air of false worship and foul life, as if to clear it with its holy reverberation. For he is writing no mere discussion, no lecture on the genesis and evolution of paganism. It is the story of a vast rebellion, told by one who, once himself a rebel, is now altogether and for ever the absolute vassal of the King whom he has "seen in His beauty," and whom it is his joy to bless, and to claim blessing for Him from His whole world for ever.

Ver. 25.

As if animated by the word of benediction, he returns to denounce "the abominable thing which God hateth" with still more terrible explicitness. **For this reason**, because of their preference of the worse to the infinite Good, **God gave them up to passions of degradation**; He handed them over, self-bound, to the helpless slavery of lust; to "*passions*," eloquent word, which indicates how the man who *will* have his own way is all the while a "sufferer," though by his own fault; *the victim* of a mastery which he has conjured from the deep of sin.

Ver. 26.

Shall we shun to read, to render, the words which follow? We will not comment and expound. May the presence of God in our hearts, hearts otherwise as

vulnerable as those of the old pagan sinners, sweep from the springs of thought and will all horrible curiosity. But if it does so it will leave us the more able, in humility, in tears, in fear, to hear the facts of this stern indictment. It will bid us listen as those who are not sitting in judgment on paganism, but standing beside the accused and sentenced, to confess that we too share the fall, and stand, if we stand, by grace alone. Aye, and we shall remember that if an Apostle thus tore the rags from the spots of the Black Death of ancient morals, he would have been even less merciful, if possible, over the like symptoms lurking still in modern Christendom, and found sometimes upon its surface.

Terrible, indeed, is the prosaic coolness with which vices now called unnameable are named and narrated in classical literature; and we ask in vain for one of even the noblest of the pagan moralists who has spoken of such sins with anything like adequate horror. Such speech, and such silence, has been almost impossible since the Gospel was felt in civilization. "Paganism," says Dr F. W. Farrar, in a powerful passage,* with this paragraph of Romans in his view, "is protected from complete exposure by the enormity of its own vices. To shew the divine reformation wrought by Christianity it must suffice that once for all the Apostle of the Gentiles seized heathenism by the hair, and branded indelibly on her forehead the stigma of her shame." Yet the vices of the old time are not altogether an antiquarian's wonder. Now as truly as then man is awfully accessible to the worst solicitations the moment he trusts himself away from God. And this needs indeed to be remembered in a stage of thought and of society whose

* *Darkness and Dawn*, p. 112.

cynicism, and whose materialism, show gloomy signs of likeness to those last days of the old degenerate world in which St Paul looked round him, and spoke out the things he saw.

For their females perverted the natural use to the unnatural. So too the males, leaving the natural use
Ver. 27. of the female, burst out aflame in their craving towards one another, males in males working out their unseemliness—and duly getting (ἀπολαμβάνοντες) in themselves that recompense of their error which was owed them.

And as they did not approve of keeping God in their
Ver. 28. moral knowledge,* God gave them up to an abandoned mind, "*a reprobate, God-rejected, mind*"; meeting their *disapprobation* with His just and fatal *reprobation* (δοκιμάζειν, ἀδόκιμος). That *mind*, taking the false premisses of the Tempter, and reasoning from them to establish the autocracy of self, led with terrible certainty and success through evil thinking to evil doing; to do the deeds which are not becoming, to *expose* the being made for God, in a naked and foul *unseemliness*, to its friends and its foes; filled full of all un-
Ver. 29. righteousness, wickedness, viciousness, greed; brimming with envy, murder, guile, ill-nature;
Ver. 30. whisperers, defamers, repulsive to God, outragers, prideful, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, senseless, faithless, loveless, truceless, pitiless; people who (οἵτινες) morally aware of
Ver. 31. (ἐπιγνόντες) God's ordinance, that they who practise such things are worthy of death, not only do them, but assent and consent with those who practise them.

* So we venture here to render ἐπίγνωσις, a knowledge deeper than that of merely logical conclusion.

Here is a terrible accusation of human life, and of the human heart; the more terrible because it is plainly meant to be, in a certain sense, inclusive, universal. We are not indeed compelled to think that the Apostle charges every human being with sins against nature, as if the whole earth were actually one vast City of the Plain. We need not take him to mean that every descendant of Adam is actually an undutiful child, or actually untrustworthy in a compact, or even actually a boaster, an *ἀλαζών*, a pretentious claimant of praise or credit which he knows he does not deserve. We may be sure that on the whole, in this lurid passage, charged less with condemnation than with "lamentation, and mourning, and woe," he is thinking mainly of the then state of heathen society in its worst developments. Yet we shall see, as the Epistle goes on, that all the while he is thinking not only of the sins of some men, but of the sin of man. He describes with this tremendous particularity the variegated symptoms of one disease—the corruption of man's heart; a disease everywhere present, everywhere deadly; limited in its manifestations by many circumstances and conditions, outward or within the man, but *in itself* quite unlimited in its dreadful possibilities. What man is, as fallen, corrupted, gone from God, is shewn, in the teaching of St Paul, by what bad men are.

Do we rebel against the inference? Quite possibly we do. Almost for certain, at one time or another, we have done so. We look round us on one estimable life and another, which we cannot reasonably think of as regenerate, if we take the strict Scriptural tests of regeneration into account, yet which asks and wins our respect, our confidence, it may be even our admiration; and we say, openly or tacitly, consciously or uncon-

sciously, that *that* life stands clear outside this first chapter of Romans. Well, be it so in our thoughts; and let nothing, no nothing, make us otherwise than ready to recognize and honour right doing wherever we see it, alike in the saints of God and in those who deny His very Being. But just now let us withdraw from all such looks outward, and calmly and in a silent hour look in. Do we, do you, do I, stand outside this chapter? Are we definitely prepared to say that the heart which we carry in our breast, whatever our friend's heart may be, is such that under no change of circumstances could it, being what it is, conceivably develop the forms of evil branded in this passage? Ah, who, that knows himself, does not know that there lies in him indefinitely more than he can know of possible evil? "Who can understand his errors?" Who has so encountered temptation in all its typical forms that he can say, with even approximate truth, that he knows his own strength, and his own weakness, exactly as they are?

It was not for nothing that the question was discussed of old, whether there was any man who would always be virtuous if he were given the ring of Gyges, and the power to be invisible to all eyes. Nor was it lightly, or as a piece of pious rhetoric, that the saintliest of the chiefs of our Reformation, seeing a murderer carried off to die, exclaimed that there went John Bradford but for the grace of God. It is just when a man is nearest God for himself that he sees what, but for God, he would be; what, taken apart from God, he is, potentially if not in act. And it is in just such a mood that, reading this paragraph of the great Epistle, he will smite upon his breast, and say, "God, be merciful to me the sinner" (Luke xviii. 13).

So doing he will be meeting the very purpose of the Writer of this passage. St Paul is full of the message of peace, holiness, and the Spirit. He is intent and eager to bring his reader into sight and possession of the fulness of the eternal mercy, revealed and secured in the Lord Jesus Christ, our Sacrifice and Life. But for this very purpose he labours first to expose man to himself; to awaken him to the fact that he is before everything else a sinner; to reverse the Tempter's spell, and to let him see the fact of his guilt with open eyes.

"The Gospel," some one has said, "can never be proved except to a bad conscience." If "bad" means "awakened," the saying is profoundly true. With a conscience sound asleep we may discuss Christianity, whether to condemn it, or to applaud. We may see in it an elevating programme for the race. We may affirm, a thousand times, that from the creed that God became flesh there result boundless possibilities for Humanity. But the Gospel, "the power of God unto salvation," will hardly be seen in its own prevailing self-evidence, as it is presented in this wonderful Epistle, till the student is first and with all else a penitent. The man must know for himself something of sin as condemnable guilt, and something of self as a thing in helpless yet responsible bondage, before he can so see Christ given for us, and risen for us, and seated at the right hand of God for us, as to say, "There is now no condemnation; Who shall separate us from the love of God? I know whom I have believed."

To the full sight of Christ there needs a true sight of self, that is to say, of sin.

## CHAPTER VI

### *HUMAN GUILT UNIVERSAL: HE APPROACHES THE CONSCIENCE OF THE JEW*

ROMANS ii. 1-17

WE have appealed, for affirmation of St Paul's tremendous exposure of human sin, to a solemn and deliberate self-scrutiny, asking the man who doubts the justice of the picture to give up for the present any instinctive wish to vindicate other men, while he thinks a little while solely of himself. But another and opposite class of mistake has to be reckoned with, and precluded; the tendency of man to a facile condemnation of others, in favour of himself; "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are" (Luke xviii. 11). It is now, as it was of old, only too possible to read, or to hear, the most searching and also the most sweeping condemnation of human sin, and to feel a sort of fallacious moral sympathy with the sentence, a phantom as it were of righteous indignation against the wrong and the doers of it, and yet wholly to mistake the matter by thinking that the hearer is righteous though the world is wicked. The man listens as if he were allowed a seat beside the Judge's chair, as if he were an esteemed assessor of the Court, and could listen with a grave yet untroubled approbation to the discourse preliminary to the sentence. Ah, he is an

assessor of the accused; he is an accomplice of his fallen fellows; he is a poor guilty man himself. Let him awake to himself, and to his sin, in time.

With such a reader or hearer in view St Paul proceeds. We need not suppose that he writes as if such states of mind were to be expected in the Roman mission; though it was quite possible that this might be the attitude of some who bore the Christian name at Rome. More probably he speaks as it were in the presence of the Christians to persons whom at any moment any of them might meet, and particularly to that large element in religious life at Rome, the unconverted Jews. True, they would not read the Epistle; but he could arm those who would read it against their cavils and refusals, and show them how to reach the conscience even of the Pharisee of the Dispersion. He could show them how to seek his soul, by shaking him from his dream of sympathy with the Judge who all the while was about to sentence *him*.

It is plain that throughout the passage now before us the Apostle has the Jew in view. He does not name him for a long while. He says many things which are as much for the Gentile sinner as for him. He dwells upon the universality of guilt as indicated by the universality of conscience; a passage of awful import for every human soul, quite apart from its place in the argument here. But all the while he keeps in view the case of the self-constituted *judge* of other men, the man who affects to be essentially better than they, to be, at least by comparison with them, good friends with the law of God. And the undertone of the whole passage is a warning to this man that his brighter light will prove his greater ruin if he does not use it; nay, that

he has not used it, and that so it is his ruin already, the ruin of his claim to judge, to stand exempt, to have nothing to do with the criminal crowd at the bar.

All this points straight at the Jewish conscience, though the arrow is levelled from a covert. If that conscience might but be reached! He longs to reach it, first for the unbeliever's own sake, that he might be led through the narrow pass of self-condemnation into the glorious freedom of faith and love. But also it was of first importance that the spiritual pride of the Jews should be conquered, or at least exposed, for the sake of the mission-converts already won. The first Christians, newly brought from paganism, must have regarded Jewish opinion with great attention and deference. Not only were their apostolic teachers Jews, and the Scriptures of the Prophets, to which those teachers always pointed, Jewish; but the weary Roman world of late years had been disposed to own with more and more distinctness that if there were such a thing as a true voice from heaven to man it was to be heard among that unattractive yet impressive race which was seen everywhere, and yet refused to be "reckoned among the nations." The Gospels and the Acts show us instances enough of educated Romans drawn towards Israel and the covenant; and abundant parallels are given us by the secular historians and satirists. The Jews, in the words of Professor Gwatkin, were "the recognized non-conformists" of the Roman world. At this very time the Emperor was the enamoured slave of a brilliant woman who was known to be proselyted to the Jewish creed. It was no slight trial to converts in their spiritual infancy to meet everywhere the question why the sages of Jerusalem had slain this Jewish Prophet, Jesus, and why

everywhere the synagogues denounced His name and His disciples. The true answer would be better understood if the bigot himself could be brought to say, "God, be merciful to me the sinner."

Ver. 1. **Wherefore you are without excuse, O man, every man who judges; when you judge the other party you pass judgment on yourself; for you practise the same things, you who judge. For* we**

Ver. 2. **know**—this is a granted point between us—**that God's judgment is truth-wise,** is a reality, in awful earnest, **upon those who practise such things.**

Ver. 3. **Now is this your calculation, O man, you who judge those who practise such things, and do them yourself, that you will escape God's judgment?** Do you surmise that some by-way of privilege and indulgence will be kept open for you? **Or do you**

Ver. 4. **despise the wealth of His kindness, and of His forbearance and longsuffering**—despise it, by mistaking it for mere indulgence, or indifference—**knowing not that God's kind ways** (*τὸ χρηστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ*) **lead**

Ver. 5. **you to repentance? No, true to** (*κατὰ*) **your own hardness, your own unrepentant heart, you are hoarding for yourself a wrath** which will be felt **in the day of wrath,** the day **of disclosure of the righteous**

Ver. 6. **judgment of God, who will requite each individual according to his works.** What will be that requital, and its law? **To those who, on the line of**

Ver. 7. (*κατὰ*) **perseverance in good work, seek,** as their point of gravitation, **glory, and honour, and**

Ver. 8. **immortality,** He will requite **life eternal. But for those who side with** (*τοῖς ἐκ*) **strife,** who take part with man, with self, with sin, against the claims

* Reading *γὰρ*.

and grace of God, and, while they disobey the truth of conscience, obey unrighteousness, yielding the will to wrong, there shall be wrath and fierce anger, trouble
Ver. 9. and bewilderment, inflicted on every soul of man, man working out what is evil, alike Jew—Jew
Ver. 10. first—and Greek. But glory, and honour, and peace shall be for every one who works what is
Ver. 11. good, alike for Jew—Jew first—and Greek. For there is no favouritism in God's court.

Here he actually touches the Jew. He has named him twice, and in both places recognizes that primacy which in the history of Redemption is really his. It is the primacy of the race chosen to be the organ of revelation and the birth-place of Incarnate God. It was given sovereignly, "not according to the works," or to the numbers, of the nation, but according to unknown conditions in the mind of God. It carried with it genuine and splendid advantages. It even gave the individual righteous Jew (so surely the language of ver. 10 implies) a certain special welcome to his Master's "Well done, good and faithful"; not to the disadvantage, in the least degree, of the individual righteous "Greek," but just such as may be illustrated in a circle of ardent and impartial friendship, where, in one instance or another, kinship added to friendship makes attachment not more intimate but more interesting. Yes, the Jew has indeed his priority, his primacy, limited and qualified in many directions, but real and permanent in its place; this Epistle (see ch. xi.) is the great Charter of it in the Christian Scriptures. But whatever the place of it is, it has no place whatever in the question of the sinfulness of sin, unless indeed to make guilt deeper where light has been greater. The Jew has a great historical position

in the plan of God. He has been accorded as it were an official nearness to God in the working out of the world's redemption. But he is not one whit the less for this a poor sinner, fallen and guilty. He is not one moment for this to excuse, but all the more to condemn, himself. He is the last person in the world to judge others. Wherever God has placed him in history, he is to place himself, in repentance and faith, least and lowest at the foot of Messiah's Cross.

What was and is true of the chosen Nation is now and for ever true, by a deep moral parity, of all communities and of all persons who are in any sense privileged, advantaged by circumstance. It is true, solemnly and formidably true, of the Christian Church, and of the Christian family, and of the Christian man. Later in this second chapter we shall be led to some reflections on Church privilege. Let us reflect here, if but in passing, on the fact that privilege of other kinds must stand utterly aside when it is a question of man's sin. Have we no temptation to forget this? Probably we are not of the mind of the Frenchman of the old *régime* who thought that "the Almighty would hesitate before He condemned for ever a man of a marquis' condition." But are we quite clear on the point that the Eternal Judge will admit no influences from other sides? The member of so excellent, so useful, a family, with many traces of the family character about him! The relative of saints, the companion of the good! A mind so full of practical energy, of literary grace and skill; so capable of deep and subtle thought, of generous words, and even deeds; so charming, so entertaining, so informing; the man of culture, the man of genius;—shall none of these things weigh in the balance, and mingle some benignant favouritism with the question,

Has he done the will of God? Nay, "*there is no favouritism in God's court!*" No one is acquitted there for his reputable connexions, or for his possession of personal "talents" (awful word in the light of its first use!), given him only that he might the better "occupy" for his Lord. These things have nothing to do with that dread thing, the Law, which has everything to do with the accusation and the award.

Before we pass to another section of the passage, let us not forget the grave fact that here, in these opening pages of this great Treatise on gratuitous Salvation, this Epistle which is about to unfold to us the divine paradox of the Justification of the Ungodly, we find this overwhelming emphasis laid upon "*perseverance in good work.*" True, we are not to allow even it to confuse the grand simplicity of the Gospel, which is to be soon explained. We are not to let ourselves think, for example, that ver. 7 depicts a man deliberately aiming through a life of merit at a *quid pro quo* at length in heaven; so much glory, honour, and immortality for so living as it would be sin not to live. St Paul does not write to contradict the Parable of the Unprofitable Servant (Luke xvii.), any more than to negative beforehand his own reasoning in the fourth chapter below. The case he contemplates is one only to be realized where man has cast himself, without one plea of merit, at the feet of mercy, and then rises up to a walk and work of willing loyalty, covetous of the "Well done, good and faithful," at its close, not because he is ambitious for himself, but because he is devoted to his God, and to His will. And St Paul knows, and in due time will tell us, that for the loyalty that serves, as well as for the repentance that first submits, the man has to thank mercy, and mercy only, first, midst, and last: "It is not of him

that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that pitieth" (ix. 16). But then, none the less, he does lay this emphasis, this indescribable stress, upon the "perseverance in good work," as the actual march of the pilgrim who travels heavenward. True to the genius of Scripture, that is to the mind of its Inspirer in His utterances to man, he isolates a main truth for the time, and leaves us alone with it. Justification will come in order. But, that it may do precisely this, that it may come in order and not out of it, he bids us first consider right, wrong, judgment, and retribution, as if there were nothing else in the moral universe. He leads us to the fact of the permanence of the results of the soul's actions. He warns us that God is eternally in earnest when He promises and when He threatens; that He will see to it that time leaves its retributive impress for ever on eternity.

The whole passage, read by a soul awake to itself, and to the holiness of the Judge of men, will contribute from its every sentence something to our conviction, our repentance, our dread of self, our persuasion that somehow from the judgment we must fly to the Judge. But this is not to be unfolded yet.

It was, I believe, a precept of John Wesley's to his evangelists, in unfolding their message, to speak first in general of the love of God to man; then, with all possible energy, and so as to search conscience to its depths, to preach the law of holiness; and then, and not till then, to uplift the glories of the Gospel of pardon, and of life. Intentionally or not, his directions follow the lines of the Epistle to the Romans.

But the Apostle has by no means done with the Jew, and his hopes of heaven by pedigree and by creed. He recurs to the impartiality of "*that day*," the coming

final crisis of human history, ever present to his soul. He dwells now almost wholly on the impartiality of *its severity*, still bearing on the Pharisee's dream that somehow the Law will be his friend, for Abraham's and Moses' sake.

Ver. 12. **For all who sinned** (or, in English idiom, **all who have sinned, all who shall have sinned**) **not law-wise, even so, not law-wise, shall perish**, shall lose the soul; **and all who in** (or let us paraphrase, **under**) **law have sinned, by law shall be judged**, that is to say, practically, **condemned**, found guilty. **For not law's hearers** are **just in God's court**; nay, **law's doers shall be justified**; for "law" is never for a moment satisfied with applause, with approbation; it demands always and inexorably obedience. **For whenever (the) Nations**, Nations **not having law, by nature**—as distinct from express precept—**do the things of the Law**, when they act on the principles of it, observing in any measure the eternal difference of right and wrong, **these men**, though **not having law, are to themselves law; shewing as they do** (*οἵτινες*)—to one another, in moral intercourse—**the work of the Law**, that which is, as a fact, its *result* where it is heard, a sense of the dread claims of right, **written in their hearts**, present to the intuitions of their nature; **while their conscience**, their sense of violated right, **bears concurrent witness**, each conscience "concurring" with all; **and while, between each other**, in the interchanges of thought and discourse, **their reasonings accuse, or it may be defend**, their actions; now in conversation, now in treatise or philosophic dialogue. And all this makes one vast phenomenon, pregnant with lessons of accountability, and ominous of a judgment coming; **in the day when God shall judge**

Ver. 13.

Ver. 14.

Ver. 15.

**the secret things of men**, even the secrets hid beneath the solemn robe of the formalist, **according to my Gospel,*** **by means of Jesus Christ**, to whom the Father "hath committed all judgment, as He is the Son of Man" (John v. 27). So he closes another solemn cadence with the blessed Name. It has its special weight and fitness here; it was the name trampled by the Pharisee, yet the name of Him who was to judge him in the great day.

Ver. 16.

The main import of the paragraph is plain. It is, to enforce the fact of the accountability of the Jew and the Greek alike, from the point of view of Law. The Jew, who is primarily in the Apostle's thought, is reminded that his possession of *the* Law, that is to say of the one *specially revealed* code not only of ritual but far more of morals†, is no recommendatory privilege, but a sacred responsibility. The Gentile meanwhile is shewn, in passing but with gravest purpose, to be by no means exempted from accountability simply for his lack of a revealed preceptive code. He possesses, as man, that moral consciousness without which the revealed code itself would be futile, for it would correspond to nothing. Made in the image of God, he has the mysterious sense

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* Here, perhaps, for once, the word *εὐαγγέλιον* is used in an extended and "improper" sense, to denote the whole message *connected with* the Glad Tidings, and so now the warning of judgment to come, which gives to the Glad Tidings its sacred urgency.

† Manifestly "*the* Law" in this passage means not the ceremonial law of Israel, but the revealed moral law given to Israel, above all in the Decalogue. This appears from the language of ver. 15, which would be meaningless if the reference were to special ordinances of worship. The Gentiles could not "shew the work of" *that* kind of "law written in their hearts"; what they shewed was, as we have explained, a "work" related to the revealed claims of God and man on the will and life.

which sees, feels, handles moral obligation. He is aware of the fact of duty. Not living up to what he is thus aware of, he is guilty.

Implicitly, all through the passage, human failure is taught side by side with human responsibility. Such a clause as that of ver. 14, "*when they do by nature the things of the law*," is certainly not to be pressed, *in such a context as this*, to be an assertion that pagan morality ever actually satisfies the holy tests of the eternal Judge. Read in the whole connexion, it only asserts that the pagan acts as a moral being; that he knows what it is to obey, and to resist, the sense of duty. This is not to say, what we shall soon hear St Paul so solemnly deny, that there exists anywhere a man whose correspondence of life to moral law is such that his "mouth" needs *not* to "be stopped," and that he is *not* to take his place as one of a "world guilty before God."

Stern, solemn, merciful argument! Now from this side, now from that, it approaches the conscience of man, made for God and fallen from God. It strips the veil from his gross iniquities; it lets in the sun of holiness upon his iniquities of the more religious type; it speaks in his dull ears the words judgment, day, tribulation, wrath, bewilderment, perishing. But it does all this that man, convicted, may ask in earnest what he shall do with conscience and his Judge, and may discover with joy that his Judge Himself has "found a ransom," and stands Himself in act to set him free.

## CHAPTER VII

### *JEWISH RESPONSIBILITY AND GUILT*

ROMANS ii. 17-29

"*THE Jew, first, and also the Greek*"; this has been the burthen of the Apostle's thought thus far upon the whole. He has had the Jew for some while in his chief thought, but he has recurred again and again in passing to the Gentile. Now he faces the Pharisee explicitly and on open ground, before he passes from this long exposure of human sin to the revelation of the glorious Remedy.

Ver. 17. **But if* you**, you emphatically, the reader or hearer now in view, you who perhaps have excused yourself from considering your own case by this last mention of the responsibility of the non-Jewish world; **if you bear the name of Jew**, whether or no you possess the corresponding spiritual reality; **and repose yourself upon the Law**, as if the possession of that awful revelation of duty was your protection, not your sentence; **and glory in God**, as if He were your private property, the decoration of your national position,

Ver. 18. whereas the knowledge of Him is given you in trust for the world; **and know the Will**, His Will, *the* Will supreme; **and put the touchstone to things**

* There is no practical doubt that εἰ δὲ not ἴδε ("*Behold*") is the right reading here.

**which differ**, like a casuist skilled in moral problems; **schooled out of the Law**, under continuous training (so the Greek present participle bids us explain) by principles and precepts which the Law supplies;—(if)

Ver. 19. **you are sure that you, yourself**, whoever else, are **a leader of blind men, a light of those who are**

Ver. 20. **in the dark, an educator of the thoughtless, a teacher of beginners, possessing, in the Law, the outline,*** the system, **of real knowledge and truth,†** (the outline indeed, but not the power and life related to it):—if this is your estimate of your position and capacities, I turn it upon yourself. Think, and answer—

Ver. 21. **You therefore, your neighbour's teacher, do you not teach yourself? You, who proclaim, Thou**

Ver. 22. **shalt not steal, do you steal? You, who say, Thou shalt not commit adultery, do you commit it? You, who abominate the idols**, affecting to loathe their very neigbourhood, **do you plunder temples**, entering the polluted precincts readily enough for

Ver. 23. purposes at least equally polluting? **You who glory in the Law**, as the palladium of your

Ver. 24. race, **do you, by your violation of the Law, disgrace your‡ God?** "**For the name of our God**

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* Μόρφωσις: we need not understand by this word a reference to *mere formalism*. Μορφή on the contrary regularly means shape expressive of underlying substance. And μόρφωσις means not shape but shaping. He means that the Pharisee really *has*, in the Law, God's formed and formative model of knowledge and reality. Still, 2 Tim. iii. 5 justifies our also seeing here a side suggestion of the possibility of dissociating even the divine model from the corresponding "power."

† Τῆς γνώσεως, τῆς ἀληθείας:—the adjective "*real*" in our rendering represents the Greek definite article, though with a slight exaggeration.

‡ Τὸν Θεόν. We represent the definite article here by "*your*," and just below by "*our*"; not without hesitation, as it somewhat exaggerates the definition.

**is, because of you, railed at among the heathen,"** as it **stands written,** in Ezekiel's message (xxxvi. 20) to the ungodly Israel of the ancient Dispersion—a message true of the Dispersion of the later day.

We need not overstrain the emphasis of the Apostle's stern invective. Not every non-Christian Jew of the first century, certainly, was an adulterer, a thief, a plunderer. When a few years later (Acts xxviii. 17) St Paul gathered round him the Jews of Rome, and spent a long day in discussing the prophecies with them, he appealed to them with a noble frankness which in some sense evidently expected a response in kind. But it is certain that the Jews of the Roman Dispersion bore a poor general character for truth and honour. And anywise St Paul knew well that there is a deeply natural connexion between unhallowed religious bigotry and that innermost failure of self-control which leaves man only too open to the worst temptations. Whatever feeds gross personal pride promotes a swift and deadly decay of moral fibre. Did this man pride himself on Abraham's blood, and his own Rabbinic lore and skill, and scorn both the Gentile "sinner" and the *'am-hââretz*, "the people of the land," the rank and file of his own race? Then he was the very man to be led helpless by the Tempter. As a fact, there are maxims of the later Rabbinism, which represent beyond reasonable doubt the spirit if not the letter of the worst watchwords of "the circumcision" of St Paul's time: "Circumcision is equivalent to all the commandments of the Law"; "To live in Palestine is equal to the Commandments"; "He that hath his abode in Palestine is sure of life eternal."* The man who could even for

* See A. M'Caul's *Old Paths* (נתיבות עולם), p. 230, etc.

an hour entertain such a creed was ready (however deep below his consciousness the readiness lay) for anything—under fitting circumstances of temptation.

So it is now, very far beyond the limits of the Jewish Dispersion of our time. Now as then, and for the Christian "outwardly" as for the Jew "outwardly," there is no surer path to spiritual degeneracy than spiritual pride. What are the watch-words which have succeeded to those of the Rabbinists who encountered St Paul? Are they words, or thoughts, of self-applause because of the historic orthodoxy of your creed? Because of the Scriptural purity of your theory of salvation? Because of the illustrious annals of your national Church, older than the nation which it has so largely welded and developed? Because of the patient courage, under contempt and exclusion, of the community which some call your denomination, your sect, but which is to you indeed your Church? Because of your loyalty to order? Because of your loyalty to liberty? Take heed. The best, corrupted, becomes inevitably the worst. In religion, there is only one altogether safe "glorying." It is when the man can say from the soul, with open eyes, and therefore with a deeply humbled heart, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. vi. 14). All other "glorying is not good." Be thankful for every genuine privilege. But for Christ's sake, and for your own soul's sake, do not, even in the inmost secret of your soul, "value *yourself*" upon them. It is disease, it is disaster, to do so.

And shall not we of the Christian Dispersion take home also what Ezekiel and St Paul say about the

blasphemies, the miserable railings at our God, caused by the sins of those who bear His Name? Who does not know that, in every region of heathendom, the missionary's plea for Christ is always best listened to where the pagan, or the Mussulman, has *not* before his eyes the Christianity of "treaty-ports," and other places where European life is to be seen lived without restraint? The stumbling-block may be the drunken sailor, or the unchaste merchant, or civilian, or soldier, or traveller. Or it may be just the man who, belonging to a race reputed Christian, merely ignores the Christian's holy Book, and Day, and House, and avoids all semblance of fellowship with his countrymen who have come to live beside him that they may preach Christ where He is not known. Or it may be the government, reputed Christian, which, amidst all its noble benefits to the vast races it holds in sway, allows them to know, to think, at least to suspect, that there are cases where it cares more for revenue than for righteousness. In all these cases the Christian Dispersion gives occasion for railing at the Christian's God: and the reckoning will be a grave matter "in that Day."

But shall the Christians of the Christendom at home stand exempt from the charge? Ah let us who name the blessed Name with even the least emphasis of faith and loyalty, dwelling amongst the masses who only passively, so to speak, are Christian, who "profess nothing," though they are, or are supposed to be, baptized—let us, amidst "the world" which understands not a little of what we ought to be, and watches us so keenly, and so legitimately —let us take home this message, sent first to the old inconsistent Israel. Do we, professing godliness, shew the mind of Christ in our secular intercourse? Do we, on the whole, give the average "world" cause to expect that

"a Christian," as such, is a man to trust in business, in friendship? Is the conviction quietly forced upon them that a Christian's temper, and tongue, are not as other men's? That the Christian minister habitually lives high above self-seeking? That the Christian tradesman faithfully remembers his customers' just interests, and is true in all his dealings? That the Christian servant, and the Christian master, are alike exceptionally mindful of each other's rights, and facile about their own? That the Christian's time, and his money, are to a remarkable degree applied to the good of others, for Christ's sake? This is what the members of the Christian Society, in the inner sense of the word Christian, are expected to be in what we all understand by "the world." If they are so, God be thanked. If they are not so—who shall weigh the guilt? Who shall adequately estimate the dishonour so done to the blessed Name? And "the Day" is coming.

But he has more to say about the position of the Jew. He would not even seem to forget the greatness of the God-given privilege of Israel; and he will use that privilege once more as a cry to conscience.

Ver. 25. **For circumcision indeed profits you, if you carry law into practice**; in that case circumcision is for you God's seal upon God's own promises to the true sons of Abraham's blood *and faith*. Are you indeed a practiser of the holy Code whose summary and essence is love to God and love to man? Can you look your Lord in the face and say—not, "I have satisfied all Thy demands; pay me that Thou owest," but, "Thou knowest that I love Thee, and therefore oh how I love Thy law"? Then you are indeed a child of the covenant, through His grace; and the seal of the covenant speaks to you the certainties of its blessing. **But if you are a transgressor**

**of law, your circumcision is turned uncircumcision**; the divine seal is to you nothing, for you are not the rightful holder of the deed of covenant which it seals. **If**

Ver. 26. **therefore the uncircumcision**, the Gentile world, in some individual instance, **carefully keeps the ordinances of the Law**, reverently remembers the love owed to God and to man, **shall not his uncircumcision**, the uncircumcision of the man supposed, **be counted as if circumcision**? Shall he not be treated as a lawful recipient of covenant blessings even though *the seal* upon the document of promise is, not at all by his fault, missing? **And** thus **shall not this hereditary** (ἐκ φύσεως) **uncircumcision**, this Gentile born and

Ver. 27. bred, **fulfilling the law** of love and duty, **judge you, who by means of letter and circumcision are** — law's transgressor, using as you practically do use the terms, the letter, of the covenant, and the rite which is its seal, as means to violate its inmost import, and claiming, in the pride of privilege, blessings promised only to self-forgetting love?

**For not the (Jew) in the visible** sphere **is a Jew**;

Ver. 27. **nor is circumcision in the visible** sphere, **in the flesh, circumcision. No, but the Jew in the hidden** sphere;

**and circumcision of heart, in Spirit, not letter**;

Ver. 29. circumcision in the sense of a work on the soul, wrought by God's Spirit, not in that of a legal claim supposed to rest upon a routine of prescribed observances. **His praise**, the praise of such a Jew, the Jew in this hidden sense, thus circumcised in heart, **does not come from men, but does come from God.** Men may, and very likely will, give him anything but praise; they will not like him the better for his deep divergence from their standard, and from their spirit. But the Lord knows him, and loves him, and prepares for him His own welcome; "Well done, good and faithful."

Here is a passage far-reaching, like the paragraphs which have gone before it. Its immediate bearing needs only brief comment, certainly brief explanation. We need do little more than wonder at the moral miracle of words like these written by one who, a few years before, was spending the whole energy of his mighty will upon the defence of ultra-Judaism. The miracle resides not only in the vastness of the man's change of view, but in the manner of it. It is not only that he denounces Pharisaism, but he denounces it in a tone entirely free from its spirit, which he might easily have carried into the opposite camp. What he meets it with is the assertion of truths as pure and peaceable as they are eternal; the truths of the supreme and ultimate importance of the right attitude of man's heart towards God, and of the inexorable connexion between such an attitude and a life of unselfish love towards man. Here is one great instance of that large spiritual phenomenon, the transfiguration of the first followers of the Lord Jesus from what they had been to what under His risen power they became. We see in them men whose convictions and hopes have undergone an incalculable revolution; yet it is a revolution which disorders nothing. Rather, it has taken fanaticism for ever out of their thoughts and purposes. It has softened their whole souls towards man, as well as drawn them into an unimagined intimacy with God. It has taught them to live above the world; yet it has brought them into the most practical and affectionate relations with every claim upon them in the world around them. "Your life is hid with Christ in God"; "Honour all men"; "He that loveth not, knoweth not God."

But the significance of this particular passage is indeed far-reaching, permanent, universal. As before,

so here, the Apostle warns us (not only the Jew of that distant day) against the fatal but easy error of perverting privilege into pride, forgetting that every gift of God is "a talent" with which the man is to trade for his Lord, and for his Lord alone. But also, more explicitly here, he warns us against that subtle tendency of man's heart to substitute, in religion, the outward for the inward, the mechanical for the spiritual, the symbol for the thing. Who can read this passage without reflections on the privileges, and on the seals of membership, of the Christian Church? Who may not take from it a warning not to put in the wrong place the sacred gifts, as sacred as they can be, because divine, of Order, and of Sacrament? Here is a great Hebrew doctor dealing with that primary Sacrament of the Elder Church of which such high and urgent things are said in the Hebrew Scriptures; a rite of which even medieval theologians have asserted that it was the Sacrament of the same grace as that which is the grace of Baptism now.* But when he has to consider the case of one who has received the physical ordinance apart from the right attitude of soul, he speaks of the ordinance in terms which a hasty reader might think slighting. He does not slight it. He says it "profits," and he is going soon to say more to that purpose. For him it is nothing less than God's own Seal on God's own Word, assuring the individual, as with a literal touch divine, that all is true *for him*, as he claims grace in humble faith. But then he contemplates the case of one who, by no contempt but by force of circumstance, has never received the holy seal, yet believes, and loves, and

* So Bernard, *Sermo in Cœnâ*, c. 2.

obeys. And he lays it down that the Lord of the Covenant will honour that man's humble claim as surely as if he brought the covenant-document ready sealed in his hand. Not that even for him the seal, if it may be had, will be nothing; it will assuredly be divine still, and will be sought as God's own gift, His seal *ex post facto*. But the principle remains that the ritual seal and the spiritual reality are separable; and that the greater thing, the thing of absolute and ultimate necessity between the soul and God, is the spiritual reality; and that where that is present there God accepts.

It was the temptation of Israel of old to put Circumcision in the place of faith, love, and holiness, instead of in its right place, as the divine imperial seal upon the covenant of grace, the covenant to be claimed and used by faith. It is the temptation of some Christians now to put the sacred order of the Church, and particularly its divine Sacraments, the holy Bath and the holy Meal, in the place of spiritual regeneration, and spiritual communion, rather than in their right place as divine imperial seals on the covenant which guarantees both to faith. For us, as for our elder brethren, this paragraph of the great argument is therefore altogether to the purpose. "Faith is greater than water," says even Peter Lombard,* the *Magister* of the medieval Schools. So it is. And the thought is in perfect unison with St Paul's principle of reasoning here. Let it be ours to reverence, to prize, to use the ordinances of our Master, with a devotion such as we might seem sure we should feel if we saw Him dip His hand in the Font, or stretch it out to break the Bread, and hallow it, and

* See *Sententiæ*, iv., iv., 3-7.

give it, at the Table. But let us be quite certain, for our own souls' warning, that it is true all the while—in the sense of this passage—that "he is not a Christian which is one outwardly, neither is that Baptism, or Communion, which is outward; but he is a Christian which is one inwardly, and Baptism and Communion are those of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter."

Sacred indeed are the God-given externals of Christian order and ordinance. But there are degrees of greatness in the world of sacred things. And the moral work of God direct upon the soul of man is greater than His sacramental work done through man's body.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *JEWISH CLAIMS: NO HOPE IN HUMAN MERIT*

ROMANS iii. 1-20

AS the Apostle dictates, there rises before his mind a figure often seen by his eyes, the Rabbinic disputant. Keen, subtle, unscrupulous, at once eagerly in earnest yet ready to use any argument for victory, how often that adversary had crossed his path, in Syria, in Asia Minor, in Macedonia, in Achaia! He is present now to his consciousness, within the quiet house of Gaius; and his questions come thick and fast, following on this urgent appeal to his, alas, almost impenetrable conscience.

Ver. 1. **"What then is the advantage of the Jew? Or what is the profit of circumcision?" "If some did not believe, what of that? Will their faithlessness cancel God's good faith?" "But if our righteousness sets off God's righteousness, would God be unjust, bringing His wrath to bear?"**

We group *the questions* together thus, to make it the clearer that we do enter here, at this opening of the third chapter, upon a brief controversial dialogue; perhaps the almost verbatim record of many a dialogue actually spoken. The Jew, pressed hard with moral proofs of his responsibility, must often have turned thus upon his pursuer, or rather have tried thus to

escape from him in the subtleties of a false appeal to the faithfulness of God.

And first he meets the Apostle's stern assertion that circumcision without spiritual reality will not save. He asks, where then is the advantage of Jewish descent? What is the profit, the good, of circumcision? It is a mode of reply not unknown in discussions on Christian ordinances; "What then is the good of belonging to a historic Church at all? What do you give the divine Sacraments to do?" The Apostle answers his questioner at once; **Much, in every way; first,** Ver. 2. **because they were entrusted with the Oracles of God.** "*First*," as if there were more to say in detail. Something, at least, of what is here left unsaid is said later, ix. 4, 5, where he recounts the long roll of Israel's spiritual and historical splendours; "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the law-giving, and the worship, and the promises, and the Fathers, and the Christ." Was it nothing to be bound up with things like these, in a bond made at once of blood-relationship, holy memories, and magnificent hopes? Was it nothing to be exhorted to righteousness, fidelity, and love by finding the individual life thus surrounded? But here he places "first" of even these wonderful treasures this, that Israel was "*entrusted with the Oracles of God*," the Utterances of God, His unique Message to man "through His prophets, in the Holy Scriptures." Yes, here was something which gave to the Jew an "advantage" without which the others would either have had no existence, or no significance. He was the trustee of Revelation. In his care was lodged the Book by which man was to live and die; through which he was to know immeasurably more about God and about himself than he could learn from all other informants put

together. He, his people, his Church, were the "witness and keeper of Holy Writ." And therefore to be born of Israel, and ritually entered into the covenant of Israel, was to be born into the light of revelation, and committed to the care of the witnesses and keepers of the light.

To insist upon this immense privilege is altogether to St Paul's purpose here. For it is a privilege which evidently carries an awful responsibility with it. What would be the guilt of the soul, and of the Community, to whom those Oracles were—not given as property, but *entrusted*—and who did not do the things they said?

Again the message passes on to the Israel of the Christian Church. "What advantage hath the Christian? What profit is there of Baptism?" "Much, in every way; first, because to the Church is entrusted the light of revelation." To be born in it, to be baptized in it, is to be born into the sunshine of revelation, and laid on the heart and care of the Community which witnesses to the genuineness of its Oracles and sees to their preservation and their spread. Great is the talent. Great is the accountability.

Ver. 3. But the Rabbinist goes on. **For if some did not believe,** what of that? **Will their faithlessness cancel God's good faith?** These Oracles of God promise interminable glories to Israel, to Israel as a community, a body. Shall not that promise hold good for the whole mass, though some (bold euphemism for the faithless multitudes!) have rejected the Promiser? Will not the unbelieving Jew, after all, find his way to life eternal for his company's sake, for his part and lot in the covenant community? "*Will God's faith,*" His good faith, His plighted word, be reduced

to empty sounds by the bad Israelite's sin? **Away with the thought,*** the Apostle answers. Any thing is more possible than that God should lie. **Nay** (δὲ), **let God prove true, and every man prove liar; as it stands written** (Psal. li. 4), "**That Thou mightest be justified in Thy words, and mightest overcome when Thou impleadest.**" † He quotes the Psalmist in that deep utterance of self-accusation, where he takes part against himself, and finds himself guilty "without one plea," and, in the loyalty of the regenerate and now awakened soul, is jealous to vindicate the justice of his *condemning* God. The whole Scripture contains no more impassioned, yet no more profound and deliberate, utterance of the eternal truth that God is always in the right or He would be no God at all; that it is better, and more reasonable, to doubt anything than to doubt His righteousness, whatever cloud surrounds it, and whatever lightning bursts the cloud.

Ver. 4.

But again the caviller, intent not on God's glory but on his own position, takes up the word. **But if our unrighteousness exhibits, sets off, God's righteousness,** if our sin gives occasion to grace to abound, if our guilt lets the generosity of God's Way of Acceptance stand out the more wonderful by contrast —**what shall we say? Would God be unjust, bringing His** (τὴν) **wrath to bear** on us, when our pardon would

Ver. 5.

* Μὴ γένοιτο: literally, "*Be it not*"; "*May it not be.*" Perhaps nothing so well represents the *energy* of the Greek as the "*God forbid*" of the Authorized Version.

† Ἐν τῷ κρίνεσθαί σε: we may render this (as in 1 Cor. vi. 1) "*When Thou goest to law.*" The Hebrew is, literally, "*When Thou judgest*"; and the Septuagint Greek, used here by St Paul, probably represents this, though by a slight paraphrase.

illustrate His free grace? Would He be unjust? Would He *not* be unjust?

We struggle, in our paraphrase, to bring out the bearing, as it seems to us, of a passage of almost equal grammatical difficulty and argumentative subtlety. The Apostle seems to be "in a strait" between the wish to represent the caviller's thought, and the dread of one really irreverent word. He throws the man's last question into a form which, grammatically, expects a "*no*" when the drift of the thought would lead us up to a shocking "*yes*."* And then at once he passes to his answer. **I speak as man**, man-wise; as if this question of balanced rights and wrongs were one between man and man, not between man and eternal God. Such talk, even for argument's sake, is impossible for the regenerate soul except under urgent protest.

Ver. 6. **Away with the thought** that He would *not* be righteous, in His punishment of any given sin. **Since how shall God judge the world?** How, on such conditions, shall we repose on the ultimate fact that He is the universal JUDGE? If He *could* not, righteously, punish a deliberate sin because pardon, under certain conditions, illustrates His glory, then He could not punish any sin at all. But He *is* the Judge; He *does* bring wrath to bear!

Ver. 7. Now he takes up the caviller on his own ground, and goes all lengths upon it, and then flies with abhorrence from it. **For if God's truth, in the matter of my lie, has abounded**, has come more

* Μὴ ἄδικος; where logically it would rather be οὐκ ἄδικος.—Just above, we explain "God's righteousness" to mean, as commonly in the Epistle, "God's way of acceptance," His reckoning His Righteousness to the sinner.

amply out, **to His glory, why am I too* called to judg-**
Ver. 8. **ment as a sinner? And** why **not** say, **as the slander against us goes, and as some assert that we do say, "Let us do the ill that the good may come"?** So they assert of us. But **their doom is just,** —the doom of those who would utter such a maxim, finding shelter for a lie under the throne of God.

No doubt he speaks from a bitter and frequent experience when he takes this particular case, and with a solemn irony claims exemption for himself from the liar's sentence of death. It is plain that the charge of untruth was, for some reason or another, often thrown at St Paul; we see this in the marked urgency with which, from time to time, he asserts his truthfulness; "The things which I say, behold, before God I lie not" (Gal. i. 20); "I speak the truth in Christ and lie not" (below, ix. 1). Perhaps the manifold sympathies of his heart gave innocent occasion sometimes for the charge. The man who could be "all things to all men" (1 Cor. ix. 22), taking with a genuine insight their point of view, and saying things which shewed that he took it, would be very likely to be set down by narrower minds as untruthful. And the very boldness of his teaching might give further occasion, equally innocent; as he asserted at different times, with equal emphasis, opposite sides of truth. But these somewhat subtle excuses for false witness against this great master of holy sincerity would not be necessary where genuine malice was at work. No man is so truthful that he cannot be charged with falsehood; and no charge is so likely to injure even where it only feigns to

* Κἀγώ: he speaks as claiming, on the caviller's principles, equal indulgence for himself.

strike. And of course the mighty paradox of Justification lent itself easily to the distortions, as well as to the contradictions, of sinners. "Let us do evil that good may come" no doubt represented the report which prejudice and bigotry would regularly carry away and spread after every discourse, and every argument, about free Forgiveness. It is so still: "If this is true, we may live as we like; if this is true, then the worst sinner makes the best saint." Things like this have been current sayings since Luther, since Whitefield, and till now. Later in the Epistle we shall see the unwilling evidence which such distortions bear to the nature of the maligned doctrine; but here the allusion is too passing to bring this out.

"*Whose doom is just.*" What a witness is this to the inalienable truthfulness of the Gospel! This brief stern utterance absolutely repudiates all apology for means by end; all seeking of even the good of men by the way of saying the thing that is not. Deep and strong, almost from the first, has been the temptation to the Christian man to think otherwise, until we find whole systems of casuistry developed whose aim seems to be to go as near the edge of untruthfulness as possible, if not beyond it, in religion. But the New Testament sweeps the entire idea of the pious fraud away, with this short thunder-peal, "*Their doom is just.*" It will hear of no holiness that leaves out truthfulness; no word, no deed, no habit, that even with the purest purpose belies the God of reality and veracity.

If we read aright Acts xxiv. 20, 21, with Acts xxiii. 6, we see St Paul himself once, under urgent pressure of circumstances, betrayed into an equivocation, and then, publicly and soon, expressing his regret of conscience. "I am a Pharisee, and a Pharisee's son;

about the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." True, true in fact, but not the whole truth, not the unreserved account of his attitude towards the Pharisee. Therefore, a week later, he confesses, does he not? that in this one thing there *was* "evil in him, while he stood before the council." Happy the Christian, happy indeed the Christian public man, immersed in management and discussion, whose memory is as clear about truth-telling, and whose conscience is as sensitive!

Ver. 9. **What then? are we superior?*** Say **not** so **at all** (*μηδαμῶς*). Thus now he proceeds, taking the word finally from his supposed antagonist. Who are the "*we*," and with whom are "we" compared? The drift of the argument admits of two replies to this question. "*We*" may be "*we Jews*"; as if Paul placed himself in instinctive sympathy, by the side of the compatriot whose cavils he has just combated, and gathered up here into a final assertion all he has said before of the (at least) equal guilt of the Jew beside the Greek. Or "*we*" may be "*we Christians*," taken for the moment as men apart from Christ; it may be a repudiation of the thought that he has been speaking from a pedestal, or from a tribunal. As if he said, "Do not think that I, or my friends in Christ, would say to the world, Jewish or Gentile, that we are holier than you. No; we speak not from the bench, but from the bar. Apart from Him who is our peace and life, we are 'in the same condemnation.' It is exactly because we are in it that we turn and say to you, 'Do not ye fear God?'" On

* *Προεχόμεθα*: "*Do we make excuse for ourselves?*" is a rendering for which there are clearer precedents in the use of the verb. But the context seems to us to advocate the above rendering, which is quite possible grammatically.

the whole, this latter reference seems the truer to the thought and spirit of the whole context.

**For we have already charged Jews and Greeks, all of them, with being under sin; with being brought under sin,** as the Greek (*ὑφ' ἁμαρτίαν*) bids us more exactly render, giving us the thought that the race has fallen *from* a good estate *into* an evil; self-involved in an awful super-incumbent ruin. **As it stands written, that there**
Ver. 10. **is not even one man righteous; there is not a man who understands, not a man who seeks his** (*τὸν*) **God. All have left the road; they have turned worthless together. There is not a man who does what is good, there is not, even so many as one. A grave set open is their throat,** exhaling the stench of polluted words; **with their tongues they have deceived; asps' venom is under their lips** *; **(men) whose mouth is brimming with curse and bitterness. Swift are their feet to shed blood; ruin and misery** for their victims **are in their ways; and the way of peace they never knew. There is no such thing as fear of God before their eyes.**

Here is a tesselation of Old Testament oracles. The fragments, hard and dark, come from divers quarries; from the Psalms (v. 9, x. 7, xiv. 1-3, xxxvi. 1, cxl. 3), from the Proverbs (i. 16), from Isaiah (lix. 7). All in the first instance depict and denounce classes of sins and sinners in Israelite society; and we may wonder at first sight how their evidence convicts all men everywhere, and in all time, of condemnable and fatal sin. But we need not only, in submission, own that some-

* *ὑπὸ τὰ χείλη*: again the Greek (as in verse 9) gives the thought of *motion to a position under*. The human "aspic" is depicted as *bringing its venom up* to its mouth, ready there for the stroke of its fangs.

how it must be so, for "it stands written" here; we may see, in part, how it is so. These special charges against certain sorts of human lives stand in the same Book which levels the general charge against *the human heart* (Jerem. xvii. 9), that it is "deceitful above all things, hopelessly diseased," and incapable of knowing all its own corruption. The crudest surface phenomena of sin are thus never isolated from the dire underlying epidemic of the race of man. The actual evil of men shews the potential evil of man. The tiger-strokes of open wickedness shew the tiger-nature, which is always present, even where its possessor least suspects it. Circumstances infinitely vary, and among them those internal circumstances which we call special tastes and dispositions. But everywhere amidst them all is the human heart, made upright in its creation, self-wrecked into moral wrongness when it turned itself from God. That it *is* turned from Him, not to Him, appears when its direction is tested by the collision between His claim and its will. And in this aversion from the Holy One, who claims the whole heart, there lies at least the potency of "all unrighteousness."

Long after this, as his glorious rest drew near, St Paul wrote again of the human heart, to "his true son" Titus (iii. 3). He reminds him of the wonder of that saving grace which he so fully unfolds in this Epistle; how, "not according to our works," the "God who loveth man" had saved Titus, and saved Paul. And what had he saved them from? From a state in which they were "disobedient, deceived, the slaves of divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another." What, the loyal and laborious Titus, the chaste, the upright, the unutterably earnest Paul? Is not the picture greatly, lamentably exagger-

ated, a burst of religious rhetoric? Adolphe Monod* tells us that he once thought it must be so; he felt himself quite unable to submit to the awful witness. But years moved, and he saw deeper into himself, seeing deeper into the holiness of God; and the truthfulness of that passage grew upon him. Not that its difficulties all vanished, but its truthfulness shone out; "and sure I am," he said from his death-bed, "that when this veil of flesh shall fall I shall recognize in that passage the truest portrait ever painted of my own natural heart."

Robert Browning, in a poem of terrible moral interest and power,† confesses that, amidst a thousand doubts and difficulties, his mind was anchored to faith in Christianity by the fact of its doctrine of Sin:

> "I still, to suppose it true, for my part
> See reasons and reasons; this, to begin;
> 'Tis the faith that launched point blank her dart
> At the head of a lie; taught Original Sin,
> The Corruption of Man's Heart."

Ver. 19. **Now we know that whatever things the Law says, it speaks them to those in the Law,** those within its range, its dominion; **that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may prove guilty with regard to God.** "*The Law*"; that is to say, here, the Old Testament Revelation. This not only contains the Mosaic and Prophetic moral code, but has it for one grand pervading object, in all its parts, to prepare man for Christ by exposing him to himself, in his shame and need. It shews him in a thousand ways that "*he cannot serve* the Lord" (Josh. xxiv. 19), on purpose that in that same Lord he may take refuge from both his guilt

* *Adieux*, § 1.

† *Gold Hair, a Legend of Pornic.*

and his impotency. And this it does for "*those in the Law*"; that is to say here, primarily, for the Race, the Church, whom it surrounded with its light of holy fire, and whom in this passage the Apostle has in his first thoughts. Yet they, surely, are not alone upon his mind. We have seen already how "the Law" is, after all, only the more full and direct enunciation of "law"; so that the Gentile as well as the Jew has to do with the light, and with the responsibility, of a knowledge of the will of God. While the chain of stern quotations we have just handled lies heaviest on Israel, it yet binds the world. It "shuts *every* mouth." It drags MAN in guilty before God.

"*That every mouth may be stopped.*" Oh solemn silence, when at last it comes! The harsh or muffled voices of self-defence, of self-assertion, are hushed at length. The man, like one of old, when he saw his *righteous* self in the light of God, "*lays his hand on his mouth*" (Job xl. 4). He leaves speech to God, and learns at last to listen. What shall he hear? An eternal repudiation? An objurgation, and then a final and exterminating anathema? No, something far other, and better, and more wonderful. But there must first be silence on man's part, if it is to be heard. "*Hear*—and your souls shall live."

So the great argument pauses, gathered up into an utterance which at once concentrates what has gone before, and prepares us for a glorious sequel. Shut thy mouth, O man, and listen now:

Ver. 20. **Because by means of works of law there shall be justified no flesh in His presence; for by means of law comes—moral knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) of sin.**

## CHAPTER IX

### *THE ONE WAY OF DIVINE ACCEPTANCE*

ROMANS iii. 21-31

SO then "there is silence" upon earth, that man may hear the "still, small voice," "the sound of stillness" (1 Kings xix. 12),* from the heavens. "The Law" has spoken, with its heart-shaking thunder. It has driven in upon the soul of man, from many sides, that one fact—guilt; the eternity of the claim of righteousness, the absoluteness of the holy Will of God, and, in contrast, the failure of man, of the race, to meet that claim and do that will. It has told man, in effect, that he is "depraved,"† that is to say, morally distorted. He is "totally depraved," that is, the distortion has affected his whole being, so that he can supply on his own part no adequate recovering power which shall restore him to harmony with God. And the Law has nothing more to say to him, except that this condition is not only deplorable, but guilty, accountable, condemnable; and that his own conscience is the concurrent witness that it is so. He is a sinner. To be a sinner is before all things to be a transgressor of law. It is other things besides. It is to be morally

* 1 Kings xix. 12.

† *Depravatus*: twisted, wrenched from the straight line.

diseased, and in need of surgery and medicine. It is to be morally unhappy, and an object of compassion. But first of all it is to be morally guilty, and in urgent need of justification, of a reversal of sentence, of satisfactory settlement with the offended—and eternal—Law of God.

That Law, having spoken its inexorable conditions, and having announced the just sentence of death, stands stern and silent beside the now silent offender. It has no commission to relieve his fears, to allay his grief, to pay his debts. Its awful, merciful business is to say "Thou shalt not sin," and "The wages of sin is death." It summons conscience to attention, and tells it in its now hearing ear far more than it had realized before of the horror and the doom of sin; and then it leaves conscience to take up the message and alarm the whole inner world with the certainty of guilt and judgment. So the man lies speechless before the terribly reticent Law.

Is it a merely abstract picture? Or do our hearts, the writer's and the reader's, bear any witness to its living truthfulness? God knoweth, these things are no curiosities of the past. We are not studying an interesting phase of early Christian thought. We are reading a living record of the experiences of innumerable lives which are lived on earth this day. There is such a thing indeed in our time, at this hour, as conviction of sin. There is such a thing now as a human soul, struck dumb amidst its apologies, its doubts, its denials, by the speech and then the silence of the Law of God. There is such a thing at this hour as a real man, strong and sound in thought, healthy in every faculty, used to look facts of daily life in the face, yet broken down in the indescribable conviction that he is a poor, guilty, lost sinner, and that his overwhelming need is—not now, not just now—the solution of problems of being, but the assur-

ance that his sin is forgiven. He must be justified, or he dies. The God of the Law must somehow say He has no quarrel with him, or he dies a death which he sees, as by an intuition peculiar to conviction of sin, to be in its proper nature a death without hope, without end.

Is this "somehow" possible?

Listen, guilty and silent soul, to a sound which is audible now. In the turmoil of either secular indifference or blind self-justification you could not hear it; at best you heard a meaningless murmur. But listen now; it is articulate, and it speaks to you. The earthquake, the wind, the fire, have passed; and you are indeed awake. Now comes "the sound of stillness" in its turn.

Ver. 21. **But now, apart from Law, God's righteousness stands displayed, attested by the Law and the Prophets; but** (δὲ)—though attested by them, in the Scriptures which all along, in word and in type, promise better things to come, and above all a Blessed One to come—**(it is) God's righteousness, through** Ver. 22. **faith in Jesus Christ,** prepared **for all and** bestowed **upon all who believe** in Him. **For there** Ver. 23. **is no distinction; for all have sinned, and fall** Ver. 24. **short of the glory of God, being justified*** **gift-wise,** gratuitously, **by His grace, through the redemption,** the ransom-rescue, **which is in Christ Jesus.** Ver. 25. Yes, it resides always in Him, the Lord of saving Merit, and so is to be found in Him alone; **whom God presented†,** put forward, **as Propitia-**

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* Δικαιούμενοι: the present participle indicates rather the *permanent principle* of justification than its actual procedure, which is, in each case, a divine sentence of acceptance, an act, an event, single and apart. See on ch. v. 1.

† Ὃν προέθετο ὁ Θεός: it is possible to render, "*Whom God designed*," in His eternal counsel of redemption. But the context just

**tion,*** **through faith in His blood,**† His blood of death, of sacrifice, of the altar; **so as to demonstrate,** to explain, to clear up, **His righteousness,** His way of acceptance and its method. The Father "presented" the Son so as to shew that His grace meant no real connivance, no indulgence without a lawful reason. He "presented" Him **because of His passing-by of sins done before;** because the fact *asked explanation* that, while He proclaimed His Law, and had not yet revealed His Gospel, He did nevertheless bear with sinners, reprieving them, condoning them, **in the forbearance of God,** in the ages when He was seen to "hold back"‡ His wrath, but did not yet disclose the reason why. It was

Ver. 26.

**with a view,** he says again, **to this demonstration** (*τὴν ἔνδειξιν*) **of His righteousness in the present period,** the season, the *καιρός*, of the manifested Gospel; **that He may be,** in our view, as well as in divine fact, at once **just,** true to His eternal Law, **and Justifier of him who belongs to** (*τὸν ἐκ*) **faith in Jesus.**

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below emphasizes the thought of "*declaration*," manifestation, explanation of the hidden Treasure. This seems to decide for the other rendering.

* Ἱλαστήριον: elsewhere in Scripture Greek this word means the Mercy Seat, the golden lid of the Ark, above which the Shechinah shone and on which the blood of atonement was sprinkled. Here is indeed a manifest and noble type of Christ. But on the other hand the word ἱλαστήριον gets that meaning only indirectly. Its native meaning is rather "*a price of expiation.*" And a somewhat sudden insertion here of the imagery of the Mercy Seat seems unlikely, in the absence of all other allusion to the High Priestly function of our Lord.

† We may punctuate, "*through faith, in His blood*"; as if to say "He is Propitiation in (in virtue of) His blood; we get the benefit through faith." But this rendering seems to us the less likely, as the less simple. The construction, "*faith in*," *πίστις ἐν τινί*, is fully verified by Mark i. 15; "believe *in* the Gospel."

‡ Ἀνοχή: we think that the word here is a pregnant expression for "*the time when God forebore.*"

This is the voice from heaven, audible when the sinner's mouth is shut, while his ears are opened by the touch of God. Without that spiritual introduction to them, very likely they will seem either a fact in the history of religious thought, interesting in the study of development, but no more; or a series of assertions corresponding to unreal needs, and in themselves full of disputable points. Read them in the hour of conviction of sin; in other words, bring to them your whole being, stirred from above to its moral depths, and you will not take them either indifferently, or with opposition. As the key meets the lock they will meet your exceeding need. Every sentence, every link of reasoning, every affirmation of fact, will be precious to you beyond all words. And you will never *fully* understand them except in such hours, or in the life which has such hours amongst its indelible memories.

Listen over again, in this sacred silence, thus broken by "the pleasant voice of the Mighty One."

"*But now*"; the happy "*now*" of present fact, of waking certainty. It is no day-dream. Look, and see; touch, and feel. Turn the blessed page again; γέγραπται, "*It stands written.*" There is indeed a "Righteousness of God," a settled way of mercy which is as holy as it is benignant, an acceptance as good in eternal Law as in eternal Love. It is "*attested by the Law and the Prophets*"; countless lines of prediction and foreshadowing meet upon it, to negative for ever the fear of illusion, of delusion. Here is no fortuitous concourse, but the long-laid plan of God. Behold its procuring Cause, magnificent, tender, divine, human, spiritual, historic. It is the beloved Son of the Father; no antagonist power from a region alien to the blessed Law and its Giver. The Law-Giver is the Christ-

Giver; He has "*set Him forth*," He has provided in Him an expiation which—does not persuade Him to have mercy, for He is eternal Love already, but liberates His love along the line of a wonderfully satisfied Holiness, and explains that liberation (to the contrite) so as supremely to win their worship and their love to the Father and the Son. Behold the Christ of God; behold the blood of Christ. In the Gospel, He is everywhere, it is everywhere; but what is your delight to find Him, and it, here upon the threshold of your life of blessing? Looking upon the Crucified, while you still "lay your hand upon your mouth," till it is removed that you may bless His Name, you understand the joy with which, age after age, men have spoken of a Death which is their life, of a Cross which is their crown and glory. You are in no mood, here and now, to disparage the doctrine of the Atoning Blood; to place it in the background of your Christianity; to obscure the Cross behind even the roofs of Bethlehem. You cannot now think well of any Gospel that does not say, "*First of all*, Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. xv. 3). You are a sinner, and you know it; "guilty before God"; and for you as such the Propitiation governs your whole view of man, of God, of life, of heaven. For you, however it may be for others, "Redemption" cannot be named, or thought of, apart from its first precious element, "remission of sins," justification of the guilty. It is steeped in ideas of Propitiation; it is red and glorious with the Redeemer's blood, without which it could not have been. The all-blessed God, with all His attributes, His character, is by you seen evermore as "*just, yet the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus*." He shines on you through the Word, and in your heart's experience,

in many another astonishing aspect. But all those others are qualified for you by this, that He is the God of a holy Justification; that He is the God who has accepted you, the guilty one, in Christ. All your thoughts of Him are formed and followed out at the foot of the Cross. Golgotha is the observatory from which you count and watch the lights of the moving heaven of His Being, His Truth, His Love.

How precious to you now are the words which once, perhaps, were worse than insipid, "*Faith*," "*Justification*," "*the Righteousness of God*"! In the discovery of your necessity, and of Christ as the all-in-all to meet it, you see with little need of exposition the place and power of *Faith*. It means, you see it now, simply your reception of Christ. It is your contact with Him, your embrace of Him. It is not virtue; it is absolutely remote from merit. But it is necessary; as necessary as the hand that takes the alms, or as the mouth that eats the unbought meal. The meaning of *Justification* is now to you no riddle of the schools. Like all the great words of scriptural theology it carries with it in divine things the meaning it bears in common things, only for a new and noble application; you see this with joy, by the insight of awakened conscience. He who "*justifies*" you does exactly what the word always imports. He does not educate you, or inspire you, up to acceptability. He pronounces you acceptable, satisfactory, at peace with Law. And this He does for Another's sake; on account of the Merit of Another, who has so done and suffered as to win an eternal welcome for Himself and everything that is His, and therefore for all who are found in Him, and therefore for you who have fled into Him, believing. So you receive with joy and wonder "*the Righteousness of God*," His way to bid

you, so deeply guilty in yourself, welcome without fear to your Judge. You are "righteous," that is to say, satisfactory to the inexorable Law. How? Because you are transfigured into a moral perfectness such as could constitute a claim? No, but because Jesus Christ died, and you, receiving Him, are found in Him.

"*There is no difference.*" Once, perhaps, you resented that word, if you paused to note it. Now you take all its import home. Whatever otherwise your "difference" may be from the most disgraceful and notorious breakers of the Law of God, you know now that there is none in *this* respect—that you are as hopelessly, whether or not as distantly, remote as they are from "*the glory of God.*" His moral "glory," the inexorable perfectness of His Character, with its inherent demand that you must perfectly correspond to Him in order so to be at peace with Him—you are indeed "*short of*" this. The harlot, the liar, the murderer, are short of it; but so are you. Perhaps they stand at the bottom of a mine, and you on the crest of an Alp; but you are as little able to touch the stars as they. So you thankfully give yourself up, side by side with them, if they will but come too, to be *carried* to the height of divine acceptance, by the gift of God, "justified gift-wise by His grace."

Ver. 27. **Where then is our (ἡ) boasting? It is shut out. By means of what law? Of works? No, but by means of faith's law,** the institute, the ordinance, which lays it upon us not to deserve, but to confide. And who can analyse or describe the joy and rest of the soul from which at last is "*shut out*" the foul inflation of a religious "*boast*"? We have praised ourselves, we have valued ourselves, on one thing or another supposed to make us worthy of the Eternal.

We may perhaps have had some specious pretexts for doing so; or we may have "boasted" (such boastings are not unknown) of nothing better than being a little less ungodly, or a little more manly, than some one else. But this is over now for ever, in principle; and we lay its practice under our Redeemer's feet to be destroyed. And great is the rest and gladness of sitting down at His feet, while the door is shut and the key is turned upon our self-applause. There is no holiness without that "exclusion"; and there is no happiness where holiness is not.

Ver. 28. **For we reckon,*** we conclude, we gather up our facts and reasons thus, **that man is justified † by faith, apart from**, irrespective of, **works of law.** In other words, the meriting cause lies wholly in Christ, and wholly outside the man's conduct. We have seen, implicitly, in the passage above, verses 10-18, what is meant here by "*works of Law*," or by "*works of the Law*." The thought is not of ritual prescription, but of moral rule. The law-breakers of verses 10-18 are men who commit violent deeds, and speak foul words, and fail to do what is good. The law-keeper, by consequence, is the man whose conduct in such respects is right, negatively and positively. And the "*works of the law*" are such deeds accordingly. So here "*we conclude*" that the justification of fallen man takes place, as to the merit which procures it, irrespective of his well-doing. It is respective only of Christ, as to merit; it has to do only, as to personal reception, with the acceptance of the meriting Christ, that is to say with faith in Him.

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* Reading γὰρ not οὖν.

† Δικαιοῦσθαι: the present infinitive, as in ver. 25, puts before us the permanence of the principle on which is based the definite act.

Then come, like a short "coda" following a full musical cadence, two brief questions and their answers, spoken almost as if again a Rabbinist were in discussion.

Ver. 29. Ver. 30. **Is God the Jews' God only? Not of the Nations too? Yes, of the Nations too; assuming** (εἴπερ) **that God is one**, the same Person in both cases; **who will justify Circumcision on the principle of faith, and Uncircumcision by means of faith.** He takes the fact, now ascertained, that faith, still faith, that is to say Christ received, is the condition to justification for all mankind; and he reasons back to the fact (so amply "attested by the Law and the Prophets," from Genesis onwards) that the true God is equally the God of all. Probably the deep inference is suggested that the fence of privilege drawn for ages round Israel was meant ultimately for the whole world's blessing, and not to hold Israel in a selfish isolation.

Ver. 31. **We cancel Law, then, by this faith of ours** (διὰ τῆς πίστεως)? We open the door, then, to moral licence? We abolish code and precept, then, when we ask not for conduct, but for faith? **Away with the thought; nay, we establish Law**; we go the very way to give a new sacredness to its every command, and to disclose a new power for the fulfilment of them all. But how this is, and is to be, the later argument is to shew.

## Detached Note to Romans III.

It would be a deeply interesting work to collect and exhibit together examples of the conveyance of great spiritual blessing, in memorable lives, through the perusal of the Epistle to the Romans. Augustine's final crisis (see below, on xiii. 14) would be one such example. As specimens of what must be a multitude we quote two cases, in each of which one verse in this third chapter of the Epistle proved the means of the divine message in a life of historical interest.

Padre Paolo Sarpi (1552—1623), "Councillor and Theologian" to the Venetian Republic, and historian of the Council of Trent, was one of the many eminent men of his day who never broke with the Roman Church, yet had genuine spiritual sympathies with the Reformation. The record of his last hours is affecting and instructive, and shews him reposing his hope with great simplicity on the divine message of this chapter, though the report makes him quote it inexactly. "Night being come, and want of spirits increasing upon him, he caused another reading of the Passion written by Saint John. He spake of his own misery, and of the trust and confidence which he had in the blood of Christ. He repeated very often those words, *Quem proposuit Deus Mediatorem per fidem in sanguine suo*, 'Whom God hath set forth to be a Mediator through faith in His blood.' In which he seemed to receive an extreme consolation. He repeated (though with much faintness) divers places of Saint Paul. He protested that of his part he had nothing to present

God with but miseries and sins, yet nevertheless he desired to be drowned in the abyss of the divine mercy ; with so much submission on one side, and yet so much cheerfulness on the other side, that he drew tears from all that were present." *

It was through the third chapter of the Romans that heavenly light first came to the terribly troubled soul of William Cowper, at St Albans, in 1764. Some have said that Cowper's religion was to blame for his melancholy. The case was far different. The first tremendous attack occurred at a time when, by his own clear account, he was quite without serious religion ; it had nothing whatever to do with either Christian doctrine or Christian practice. The recovery from it came with his first sight, in Scripture, of the divine mercy in our Lord Jesus Christ. His own account of this crisis is as follows : †

"But the happy period which was to afford me a clear opening of the free mercy of God in Christ Jesus, was now arrived. I flung myself into a chair near the window, and, seeing a Bible there, ventured once more to apply to it for comfort and instruction. The first verse I saw was the 25th of the 3rd of Romans ; 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.'

"Immediately I received strength to believe it, and the full beams of the Sun of Righteousness shone upon me. I saw the sufficiency of the atonement He had

* *The Life of Father Paul the Venetian, translated out of Italian :* London, 1676.

† *Memoir of the Early Life of William Cowper, written by Himself.*

made, my pardon sealed in His blood, and all the fulness and completeness of His justification. Unless the Almighty arm had been under me, I think I should have died with gratitude and joy. I could only look up to heaven in silent fear, overwhelmed with love and wonder. But the work of the Holy Ghost is best described in His own words; it is 'joy unspeakable and full of glory.'"

## CHAPTER X

### *ABRAHAM AND DAVID*

ROMANS iv. 1-12

THE Jewish disputant is present still to the Apostle's thought. It could not be otherwise in this argument. No question was more pressing on the Jewish mind than that of Acceptance; thus far, truly, the teaching and discipline of the Old Testament had not been in vain. And St Paul had not only, in his Christian Apostleship, debated that problem countless times with Rabbinic combatants; he had been himself a Rabbi, and knew by experience alike the misgivings of the Rabbinist's conscience, and the subterfuges of his reasoning.

So now there rises before him the great name of Abraham, as a familiar watchword of the controversy of Acceptance. He has been contending for an absolutely inclusive verdict of "*guilty*" against man, against every man. He has been shutting with all his might the doors of thought against human "*boasting*," against the least claim of man to have merited his acceptance. Can he carry this principle into quite impartial issues? Can he, a Jew in presence of Jews, apply it without apology, without reserve, to "the Friend of God" himself? What will he say to that majestic Example of man? His name itself sounds like a claim to almost

worship. As he moves across the scene of Genesis, we —even we Gentiles—rise up as it were in reverent homage, honouring this figure at once so real and so near to the ideal; marked by innumerable lines of individuality, totally unlike the composed picture of legend or poem, yet walking with God Himself in a personal intercourse so habitual, so tranquil, so congenial. Is this a name to becloud with the assertion that here, as everywhere, acceptance was hopeless but for the clemency of God, "*gift-wise, without deeds of law*"? Was not at least Abraham accepted because he was morally worthy of acceptance? And if Abraham, then surely, in abstract possibility, others also. There must be a group of men, small or large, there is at least one man, who can "boast" of his peace with God.

On the other hand, if with Abraham it was not thus, then the inference is easy to all other men. Who but he is called "the Friend" (2 Chron. xx. 7, Isai. xli. 8)? Moses himself, the almost deified Lawgiver, is but "the Servant," trusted, intimate, honoured in a sublime degree by his eternal Master. But he is never called "the Friend." That peculiar title seems to preclude altogether the question of a legal acceptance. Who thinks of his friend as one whose relation to him needs to be good in law at all? The friend stands as it were behind law, or above it, in respect of his fellow. He holds a relation implying personal sympathies, identity of interests, contact of thought and will, not an anxious previous settlement of claims, and remission of liabilities. If then the Friend of the Eternal Judge proves, nevertheless, to have needed Justification, and to have received it by the channel not of his personal worth but of the grace of God, there will be little hesitation about other

men's need, and the way by which alone other men shall find it met.

In approaching this great example, for such it will prove to be, St Paul is about to illustrate all the main points of his inspired argument. By the way, by implication, he gives us the all-important fact that even an Abraham, even "the Friend," did need justification *somehow*. Such is the eternal Holy One that no man can walk by His side and live, no, not in the path of inmost "friendship," without an acceptance before His face as He is Judge. Then again, such is He, that even an Abraham found this acceptance, as a matter of fact, not by merit but by faith; not by presenting himself, but by renouncing himself, and taking God for all; by pleading not, "I am worthy," but, "Thou art faithful." It is to be shewn that Abraham's justification was such that it gave him not the least ground for self-applause; it was not in the least degree based on merit. It was "of grace, not of debt." A promise of sovereign kindness, connected with the redemption of himself, and of the world, was made to him. He was not morally worthy of such a promise, if only because he was not morally perfect. And he was, humanly speaking, physically incapable of it. But God offered Himself freely to Abraham, in His promise; and Abraham opened the empty arms of personal reliance to receive the unearned gift. Had he stayed first to earn it he would have shut it out; he would have closed his arms. Rightly renouncing himself, because seeing and trusting his gracious God, the sight of whose holy glory annihilates the idea of man's claims, he opened his arms, and the God of peace filled the void. The man received his God's approval, because he interposed nothing of his own to intercept it.

From one point of view, the all-important view-point here, it mattered not what Abraham's conduct had been. As a fact, he was already devout when the incident of Gen. xv. occurred. But he was also actually a sinner; *that* is made quite plain by Gen. xii., the very chapter of the Call. And potentially, according to Scripture, he was a great sinner; for he was an instance of the human heart. But this, while it constituted Abraham's urgent need of acceptance, was not in the least a barrier to his acceptance, when he turned from himself, in the great crisis of absolute faith, and accepted God in His promise.

The principle of the acceptance of "the Friend" was identically that which underlies the acceptance of the most flagrant transgressor. As St Paul will soon remind us, David in the guilt of his murderous adultery, and Abraham in the grave walk of his worshipping obedience, stand upon the same level here. Actually or potentially, each is a great sinner. Each turns from himself, unworthy, to God in His promise. And the promise is his, not because his hand is full of merit, but because it is empty of himself.

It is true that Abraham's justification, unlike David's, is not explicitly connected in the narrative with a moral crisis of his soul. He is not depicted, in Gen. xv., as a conscious penitent, flying from justice to the Judge. But is there not a deep suggestion that something not unlike this did then pass over him, and through him? That short assertion, that "he trusted the LORD, and He counted it to him for righteousness," is an anomaly in the story, if it has not a spiritual depth hidden in it. Why, just then and there, should we be told this about his acceptance with God? Is it not because the vastness of the promise had made the man see in contrast

the absolute failure of a corresponding merit in himself? Job (xlii. 1-6) was brought to self-despairing penitence not by the fires of the Law but by the glories of Creation. Was not Abraham brought to the same consciousness, whatever form it may have taken in his character and period, by the greater glories of the Promise? Surely it was there and then that he learnt that secret of self-rejection in favour of God which is the other side of all true faith, and which came out long years afterwards, in its mighty issues of "work," when he laid Isaac on the altar.*

It is true, again, that Abraham's faith, his justifying reliance, is not connected in the narrative with any articulate expectation of an atoning Sacrifice. But here first we dare to say, even at the risk of that formidable charge, an antique and obsolete theory of the Patriarchal creed, that probably Abraham knew much more about the Coming One than a modern critique will commonly allow. "He rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad" (John viii. 56). And further, the faith which justifies, though what it touches in fact is the blessed Propitiation, or rather God in the Propitiation, does not always imply an articulate knowledge of the whole "reason of the hope." It assuredly implies a true submission to *all that the believer knows* of the revelation of that reason. But he may (by circumstances) know very little of it, and yet be a believer. The saint who prayed (Psal. cxliii. 2) "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified," cast himself upon a God who, being absolutely holy, yet can somehow, just as He is, justify the sinner. Perhaps

* On St James' use of that great incident, see detached note, p. 115.

he knew much of the reason of Atonement, as it lies in God's mind, and as it is explained, as it is demonstrated, in the Cross. But perhaps he did not. What he did was to cast himself up to the full light he had, "without one plea," upon his Judge, as a man awfully conscious of his need, and trusting only in a sovereign mercy, which *must* also be a righteous, a law-honouring mercy, because it is the mercy of the Righteous Lord.

Let us not be mistaken, meanwhile, as if such words meant that a definite creed of the Atoning Work is not possible, or is not precious. This Epistle will help us to such a creed, and so will Galatians, and Hebrews, and Isaiah, and Leviticus, and the whole Scripture. "Prophets and kings desired to see the things we see, and did not see them" (Luke x. 24). But that is no reason why we should not adore the mercy that has unveiled to us the Cross and the blessed Lamb.

But it is time to come to the Apostle's words as they stand.

Ver. 1. **What then shall we say that Abraham has found**—"*has found*," the perfect tense of abiding and always significant fact—"*has found*," in his great discovery of divine peace—**our forefather, according to the flesh?** "*According to the flesh*"; that is to say, (having regard to the prevailing moral use of the word "*flesh*" in this Epistle,) "in respect of self," "in the region of his own works and merits."* Ver. 2. **For if Abraham was justified as a result of works, he has a boast**; he has a right to self-applause. Yes, such is the principle indicated here; if man merits, man is

* We see much reason, however, in the explanation which connects κατὰ σάρκα with πατέρα (or προπάτορα) ἡμῶν: "*our father according to the flesh*," our natural progenitor.

entitled to self-applause. May we not say, in passing, that the common instinctive sense of the moral discord of self-applause, above all in spiritual things, is one among many witnesses to the truth of our justification by faith only? But St Paul goes on; **Ah, but not towards God**; not when even an Abraham looks HIM in the face, and sees himself in that Light. As if to say, "If he earned justification, he might have boasted rightly; but 'rightful boasting,' when man sees God, is a thing unthinkable; therefore his justification was given, not earned." Ver. 3. **For what says the Scripture,** the passage, the great text (Gen. xv. 6)? "**Now Abraham believed** * **God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.**" Ver. 4. **Now to the man who works, his** (ὁ) **reward,** his earned requital,† **is not reckoned grace-wise,** as a gift of generosity, **but debt-wise; it is to the man who does not work, but believes, confides, in Him who justifies the ungodly one, that "his faith is reckoned as righteousness."** "*The ungodly one*"; as if to bring out by an extreme case the glory of the wonderful paradox. "*The ungodly*," the ἀσεβής, is undoubtedly a word intense and dark; it means not the sinner only, but the open, defiant sinner. Every human heart is *capable* of such sinfulness, for "*the* heart is deceitful above all things." In this respect, as we have seen, in the potential respect, even an Abraham is a great sinner. But there are indeed "sinners and sinners," in the experiences of life; and St Paul is ready now with a conspicuous example of

* In the Greek, ἐπίστευσε stands first in the clause, and is thus emphatic.

† Not that μισθὸς always gives the thought of earning as a right. It may mean merely "*result, issue*," however realized. See *e.g.* 2 John 8. But the context here decides the reference.

the justification of one who was truly, at one miserable period, by his own fault, "an ungodly one."

"Thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme" (2 Sam. xii. 14). He had done so indeed. The faithful photography of the Scriptures shews us David, the chosen, the faithful, the man of spiritual experiences, acting out his lustful look in adultery, and half covering his adultery with the most base of constructive murders, and then, for long months, refusing to repent. Yet was David justified: "I have sinned against the Lord"; "The Lord also hath put away thy sin." He turned from his awfully ruined self to God, and *at once* he received remission. Then, and to the last, he was chastised. But then and there he was unreservedly justified, and with a justification which made him sing a loud beatitude.

Ver. 6. **Just as David too speaks his felicitation (*τὸν μακαρισμὸν*) of the man** (and it was himself) **to whom God reckons righteousness irrespective of works,**

Ver. 7. **"Happy they whose iniquities have been remitted,**

Ver. 8. **and whose sins have been covered; happy the man to whom the Lord will not reckon sin"** (Psal. xxxii. 1, 2). Wonderful words, in the context of the experience out of which they spring! A human soul which has greatly transgressed, and which knows it well, and knows too that to the end it will suffer a sore discipline because of it, for example and humiliation, nevertheless knows its pardon, and knows it as a happiness indescribable. The iniquity has been "*lifted*"; the sin has been "*covered*," has been struck out of the book of "*reckoning*," written by the Judge. The penitent will never forgive himself; in this very Psalm he tears from his sin all the covering woven by his own heart. But his God has given him remission,

has reckoned him as one who has not sinned, so far as access to Him and peace with Him are in question. And so his song of shame and penitence begins with a beatitude, and ends with a cry of joy.

We pause to note the exposition implied here of the phrase, "*to reckon righteousness.*" It is to treat the man as one whose account is clear. "Happy the man to whom the Lord will not reckon sin." In the phrase itself, "*to reckon* righteousness," (as in its Latin equivalent, "*to impute* righteousness,") the question, *what clears the account*, is not answered. Suppose the impossible case of a record kept absolutely clear by the man's own sinless goodness; then the "reckoned," the "imputed, righteousness" would mean the Law's contentment with him on his own merits. But the context of human sin fixes the actual reference to an "imputation" which means that the awfully defective record is treated, for a divinely valid reason, as if it were, what it is not, good. The man is at peace with his Judge, though he has sinned, because the Judge has joined him to Himself, and taken up his liability, and answered for it to His own Law. The man is dealt with as righteous, being a sinner, for his glorious Redeemer's sake. It is pardon, but more than pardon. It is no mere indulgent dismissal; it is a welcome as of the worthy to the embrace of the Holy One.

Such is the Justification of God. We shall need to remember it through the whole course of the Epistle. To make Justification a mere synonym for Pardon is always inadequate. Justification is the contemplation and treatment of the penitent sinner, found in Christ, as righteous, as satisfactory to the Law, not merely as one whom the Law lets go Is this a fiction? Not at

all. It is vitally linked to two great spiritual facts. One is, that the sinner's Friend has Himself dealt, in the sinner's interests, with the Law, honouring its holy claim to the uttermost under the human conditions which He freely undertook. The other is that he has mysteriously, but really, joined the sinner to Himself, in faith, by the Spirit; joined him to Himself as limb, as branch, as bride. Christ and His disciples are *really* One in the order of spiritual life. And so the community between Him and them is real, the community of their debt on the one side, of His merit on the other.

Now again comes up the question, never far distant in St Paul's thought, and in his life, what these facts of Justification have to do with Gentile sinners. Here is David blessing God for his unmerited acceptance, an acceptance by the way wholly unconnected with the ritual of the altar. Here above all is Abraham, "justified in consequence of faith." But David was a child of the covenant of circumcision. And Abraham was the father of that covenant. Do not their justifications speak only to those who stand, with them, inside that charmed circle? Was not Abraham justified by faith *plus circumcision*? Did not the faith act only because he was already one of the privileged? **This felicitation therefore,** this cry of "Happy are the freely justified," **is it upon the circumcision, or upon the uncircumcision? For we say that to Abraham,** with an emphasis* on "*Abraham*," **his faith was reckoned as righteousness.** The question, he means, is legitimate, "*for*" Abraham is not at first sight a case in point for the justification of the outside world, the non-privileged races of man. But consider: **How**

Ver. 9.

Ver. 10.

* By the position of the name in the Greek sentence.

**then was it reckoned?** To Abraham **in circumcision or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncir-**

Ver. 11. **cumcision**; fourteen years at least had to pass before the covenant rite came in. **And he received the sign of circumcision,** (with a stress upon "*sign*," as if to say that the "*thing*," the reality signed, was his already,) **as a seal on the righteousness of the faith that was in his circumcision,** a seal on the acceptance which he received, antecedent to all formal privilege, in that bare hand of faith. And all this was so, and was recorded so, with a purpose of far-reaching significance: **that he might be father,** exemplar, representative, **of all who believe notwithstanding uncircumcision,*** **that to them righteousness should be reckoned; and father of**

Ver. 12. **circumcision,** exemplar and representative within its circle also, **for those who do not merely belong to circumcision, but for those† who also step in the track of the uncircumcision-faith of our father Abraham.**

So privilege had nothing to do with acceptance, except to countersign the grant of a grace absolutely free. The Seal did nothing whatever to make the Covenant. It only verified the fact, and guaranteed the *bona fides* of the Giver. As the Christian Sacraments are, so was the Patriarchal Sacrament; it was "a sure testimony and effectual sign of God's grace and good will."‡ But the grace and the good will come not through the Sacrament as through a medium, but straight from God to the man who took God at His word. "The means whereby he received," the mouth with which he fed upon the celestial food, "was faith."§ The rite came

* Διὰ ἀκροβυστίας: as if *passing through* its seeming obstacle.

† So the Greek precisely. But practically the words "*for those*" may be omitted here.

‡ See Article xxv. § See Article xxviii.

not between the man and his accepting Lord, but as it were was present at the side to assure him with a physical concurrent fact that all was true. "Nothing between" was the law of the great transaction; nothing, not even a God-given ordinance; nothing but the empty arms receiving the Lord Himself;—and empty arms indeed put "nothing between."

## Detached Note to Chapter X

*The following is extracted from the Commentary on this Epistle in "The Cambridge Bible"* (p. 261).

"[What shall we say to] the verbal discrepancy between St Paul's explicit teaching that 'a man is justified by faith *without works*,' and St James' equally explicit teaching that '*by works* a man is justified, and *not by faith only*'? With only the New Testament before us, it is hard not to assume that the one Apostle has in view some distortion of the doctrine of *the other*. But the fact (see Lightfoot's *Galatians*, detached note to ch. iii.) that Abraham's faith was a staple Rabbinic text alters the case, by making it perfectly possible that St James (writing to members of the Jewish Dispersion) had not Apostolic but Rabbinic teaching in view. And the line such teaching took is indicated by Jas ii. 19, where an example is given of the faith in question; and that example is concerned wholly with the grand point of *strictly Jewish orthodoxy*—God is One. . . . The persons addressed [were thus those whose] idea of faith was not *trustful acceptance*, a belief of the heart, but *orthodox adherence*, a belief of the head. And St James [took] these persons strictly on their own ground, and assumed, for his argument, their own very faulty account of faith to be correct.

"He would thus be proving the point, equally dear to St Paul, that mere theoretic orthodoxy, apart from effects on the will, is valueless. He would not, in the remotest degree, be disputing the Pauline doctrine that the guilty soul is put into a position of acceptance with the Father only by vital connexion with the Son, and that this connexion is effectuated, *absolutely and alone*,

not by personal merit, but by trustful acceptance of the Propitiation and its all-sufficient vicarious merit. From such trustful acceptance 'works' (in the profoundest sense) will inevitably follow; not as antecedents but as consequents of justification. And thus . . . 'it is faith alone which justifies; but the faith which justifies can never be alone.'"

## CHAPTER XI

### *ABRAHAM* (ii)

ROMANS iv. 13-25

AGAIN we approach the name of Abraham, Friend of God, Father of the Faithful. We have seen him justified by faith, personally accepted because turning altogether to the sovereign Promiser. We see him now in some of the glorious issues of that acceptance; "Heir of the world," "Father of many nations." And here too all is of grace, all comes through faith. Not works not merit, not ancestral and ritual privilege, secured to Abraham the mighty Promise; it was his because he, pleading absolutely nothing of personal worthiness, and supported by no guarantees of ordinance "*believed God.*"

We see him as he steps out from his tent under that glorious canopy, that Syrian "night of stars." We look up with him to the mighty depths, and receive their impression upon our eyes. Behold the innumerable points and clouds of light! Who can count the half-visible rays which make white the heavens, gleaming behind, beyond, the thousands of more numerable luminaries? The lonely old man who stands gazing there, perhaps side by side with his divine Friend manifested in human form, is told to try to count. And then he hears the promise, "So shall thy seed be."

It was then and there that he received justification by faith. It was then and there also that, by faith, as a man uncovenanted, unworthy, but called upon to take what God gave, he received the promise that he should be "heir of the world."

It was an unequalled paradox—unless indeed we place beside it the scene when, eighteen centuries later, in the same land, a descendant of Abraham's, a Syrian Craftsman, speaking as a religious Leader to His followers, told them (Matt. xiii. 37, 38) that the "field was the world," and He the Master of the field.

"*Heir of the world*"! Did this mean, of the universe itself? Perhaps it did, for CHRIST was to be the Claimant of the promise in due time; and under His feet all things, literally all, are set already in right, and shall be hereafter set in fact. But the more limited, and probably in this place the fitter, reference is vast enough; a reference to "the world" of earth, and of man upon it. In his "seed," that childless senior was to be King of Men, Monarch of the continents and oceans. To him, in his seed, "the utmost parts of the earth" were given "for his possession." Not his little clan only, encamped on the dark fields around him, nor even the direct descendants only of his body, however numerous, but "all nations," "all kindreds of the earth," were "to call him blessed," and to be blessed in him, as their patriarchal Chief, their Head in covenant with God. "We see not yet all things" fulfilled of this astonishing grant and guarantee. We shall not do so, till vast promised developments of the ways of God have come to sight. But we do see already steps taken towards that issue, steps long, majestic, never to be retraced. We see at this hour in literally every region of the human world the messengers—an always more numerous army—of

the Name of "the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.' They are working everywhere; and everywhere, notwithstanding innumerable difficulties, they are winning the world for the great Heir of the Promise. Through paths they know not these missionaries have gone out; paths hewn by the historical providence of God, and by His eternal life in the Church, and in the soul. When "the world" has seemed shut, by war, by policy, by habit, by geography, it has opened, that they may enter; till we see Japan throwing back its castle-doors, and inner Africa not only discovered but become a household word for the sake of its missions, of its martyrdoms, of the resolve of its native chiefs to abolish slavery even in its domestic form.*

No secular conscious programme has had to do with this. Causes entirely beyond the reach of human combination have been, as a fact, combined; the world has been opened to the Abrahamic message just as the Church has been inspired anew to enter in, and has been awakened to a deeper understanding of her glorious mission. For here too is the finger of God; not only in the history of the world, but in the life of the Church and of the Christian. For a long century now, in the most living centres of Christendom, there has been waking and rising a mighty revived consciousness of the glory of the Gospel of the Cross, and of the Spirit; of the grace of Christ, and also of His claim. And at this hour, after many a gloomy forecast of unbelieving and apprehensive thought, there are more men and women ready to go to the ends of the earth with the message of the Son of Abraham, than in all time before.

Contrast these issues, even these—leaving out of

* In Uganda, 1893.

sight the mighty future —with the starry night when the wandering Friend of God was asked to believe the incredible, and was justified by faith, and was invested through faith with the world's crown. Is not God indeed in the fulfilment? Was He not indeed in the promise? We are ourselves a part of the fulfilment; we, one of the "many Nations" of whom the great Solitary was then made "the Father." Let us bear our witness, and set to our seal.

In doing so, we attest and illustrate the work, the ever blessed work, of faith. That man's reliance, at that great midnight-hour, merited nothing, but received everything. He took in the first place acceptance with God, and then with it, as it were folded and embedded in it, he took riches inexhaustible of privilege and blessing; above all, the blessing of being made a blessing. So now, in view of that hour of Promise, and of these ages of fulfilment, we see our own path of peace in its divine simplicity. We read, as if written on the heavens in stars, the words, "Justified by Faith." And we understand already, what the Epistle will soon amply unfold to us, how for us, as for Abraham, blessings untold of other orders lie treasured in the grant of our acceptance. "Not for him only, but for us also, believing."

Let us turn again to the text.

Ver. 13. **For not through law came the promise to Abraham, or to his seed, of his being the world's heir, but through faith's righteousness;** through the acceptance received by uncovenanted, unprivileged faith. Ver. 14. **For if those who belong to law inherit** Abraham's promise, **faith is ipso facto void, and the promise is ipso facto annulled.*** **For wrath**

* We attempt thus to represent the perfects, κεκένωται, κατήργηται.

**is what the Law works out**; it is only * **where law is not that transgression is not either.** As much as to say, that to suspend eternal blessing, the blessing which in its nature can deal only with ideal conditions, upon man's obedience to law, is to bar fatally the hope of a fulfilment. Why? Not because the Law is not holy; not because disobedience is not guilty; as if man were ever, for a moment, mechanically compelled to disobey. But because as a fact man is a fallen being, however he became so, and whatever is his guilt as such. He is fallen, and has no true self-restoring power. If then he is to be blessed, the work must begin in spite of himself. It must come from without, it must come unearned, it must be of grace, through faith. **Therefore it is on** (literally, "*out of*") **faith, in order to be grace-wise, to make secure the promise, to all the seed, not only to that which belongs to the Law, but to that which belongs to the faith of Abraham,** to the "seed" whose claim is no less and no more than Abraham's faith; **who is father of all us, as it stands written,** (Gen. xvii. 5), "**Father of many Nations**† **have I appointed thee**"—**in the sight of the God whom he believed, who vivifies the dead, and calls,** addresses, deals with, **things not-being as being.** "*In the sight of God*"; as if to say, that it matters little what Abraham is for "us all" in the sight of *man*, in the sight and estimate of the Pharisee. The Eternal Justifier and Promiser dealt with Abraham, and in him with the world, before the birth of that Law

Ver. 15.

Ver. 16.

Ver. 17.

* Read οὗ δὲ not οὗ γάρ.

† It is impossible to convey in English the point of the word ἔθνη here, with its faint reference to the *Gentiles* (in the sense common in later Judaism), spiritually "naturalized" among Abraham's descendants.

which the Pharisee has perverted into his rampart of privilege and isolation. He took care that the mighty transaction should take place not actually only, but significantly, in the open field and beneath the boundless cope of stars. It was to affect not one tribe, but all the nations. It was to secure blessings which were not to be demanded by the privileged, but taken by the needy. And so the great representative Believer was called to believe before Law, before legal Sacrament, and under every personal circumstance of humiliation and discouragement. Ver. 18. **Who, past hope, on hope, believed**; stepping from the dead hope of nature to the bare hope of the promise, **so that he became father of many Nations; according to what stands spoken, "So shall thy seed be."*** Ver. 19. **And, because he failed not† in his (τῇ) faith, he did not notice his own body, already turned to death, near (που) a century old as he now was, and the death-state of the womb of Sarah.** Ver. 20. **No, on the promise of God—he did not waver by his unbelief,‡ but received strength§ by his (τῇ) faith, giving glory to God,** the "glory" of dealing with Him as being what He is, Al-mighty and All-true, Ver. 21. **and fully persuaded that**

* Observe the characteristically *fragmentary* quotation, which assumes the reader's knowledge of the context—the context of the stars. Compare Heb. vi. 14, which similarly quotes Gen. xxii. 16, 17.

† Μὴ ἀσθενήσας:—we attempt to convey the thought, given by the aorist, that he *then and there* was "not weak."

‡ We render this clause as literally as possible. It is as if he would have written "On the promise of God *he relied*," but changed the expression to one more ample and more forcible. "*His* unbelief": τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ. Not that Abraham *had* unbelief actually, but he had it potentially; he *might have* disbelieved. In that sense unbelief was "*his*."

§ Ἐνεδυναμώθη: the thought is of strength summoned *at a crisis*.

what He has promised He is able actually to do. Where-
Ver. 22. **fore actually** (*καὶ*) **it was reckoned to him as righteousness.** Not because such a "giving to God the glory" which is only His eternal due was morally meritorious, in the least degree. If it were so, Abraham "would have whereof to glory." The "*wherefore*" is concerned with the whole record, the whole transaction. Here was a man who took the right way to receive sovereign blessing. He interposed nothing between the Promiser and himself. He treated the Promiser as what He is, all-sufficient and all-faithful. He opened his empty hand in that persuasion, and so, because the hand was empty, the blessing was laid upon its palm.

Ver. 23. **Now it was not written only on his account, that it was reckoned to him, but also on account of us,**
Ver. 24. **to whom it is sure** (*μέλλει*) **to be reckoned,** in the fixed intention of the divine Justifier, as each successive applicant comes to receive; **believing as we do on the Raiser-up of Jesus our Lord from the dead; who**
Ver. 25. **was delivered up on account of our transgressions, and was raised up on account of our justification.**

Here the great argument moves to a pause, to the cadence of a glorious rest. More and more, as we have pursued it, it has disengaged itself from the obstructions of the opponent, and advanced with a larger motion into a positive and rejoicing assertion of the joys and wealth of the believing. We have left far behind the pertinacious cavils which ask, now whether there is any hope for man outside legalism, now whether within legalism there can be any danger even for deliberate unholiness, and again whether the Gospel of gratuitous acceptance does not cancel the law of duty. We have left the Pharisee for Abraham, and have stood beside him to

look and listen. He, in the simplicity of a soul which has seen itself and seen the Lord, and so has not one word, one thought, about personal privilege, claim, or even fitness, receives a perfect acceptance in the hand of faith, and finds that the acceptance carries with it a promise of unimaginable power and blessing. And now from Abraham the Apostle turns to "*us*," "*us all*," "*us also*." His thoughts are no longer upon adversaries and objections, but on the company of the faithful, on those who are one with Abraham, and with each other, in their happy willingness to come, without a dream of merit, and take from God His mighty peace in the name of Christ. He finds himself not in synagogue or in school, disputing, but in the believing assembly, teaching, unfolding in peace the wealth of grace. He speaks to congratulate, to adore.

Let us join him there in spirit, and sit down with Aquila and Priscilla, with Nereus, and Nymphas, and Persis, and in our turn remember that "it was written for us also." Quite surely, and with a fulness of blessing which we can never find out in its perfection, to us also "*faith is sure to be reckoned, μέλλει λογίζεσθαι, as righteousness, believing as we do, τοῖς πιστεύουσιν, on the Raiser-up of Jesus our Lord,* ours also, *from the dead*." To us, as to them, the Father presents Himself as the Raiser-up of the Son. He is known by us in that act. It gives us His own warrant for a boundless trust in His character, His purposes, His unreserved intention to accept the sinner who comes to His feet in the name of His Crucified and Risen Son. He bids us—not forget that He is the Judge, who cannot for a moment connive. But He bids us believe, He bids us *see*, that He, being the Judge, and also the Law-Giver, has dealt with His own Law, in a way that satisfies it, that satisfies

HIMSELF. He bids us thus understand that He now "is sure to" justify, to accept, to find not guilty, to find righteous, satisfactory, the sinner who believes. He comes to us, He, this eternal Father of our Lord, to assure us, in the Resurrection, that He has sought, and has "found, a Ransom"; that He has not been prevailed upon to have mercy, a mercy behind which there may therefore lurk a gloomy reserve, but has Himself "set forth" the beloved Propitiation, and then accepted Him (not it, but Him) with the acceptance of not His word only but His deed. He is the God of Peace. How do we know it? We thought He was the God of the tribunal, and the doom. Yes; but He has "brought the great Shepherd from the dead, in the blood of the everlasting Covenant" (Heb. xiii. 20). Then, O eternal Father of our Lord, we will believe Thee; we will believe in Thee; we will, we do, in the very letter of the words Thou didst bid Thy messenger write down here, "*believe upon Thee*," ἐπὶ τὸν Ἐγείραντα, as in a deep repose. Truly, in *this* glorious respect, though Thou art consuming Fire, "there is nothing in Thee to dread."

"*Who was delivered up because of our transgressions.*" So dealt the Father with the Son, who gave Himself. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him"; "He spared not His own Son." "*Because of our transgressions*"; to meet the fact that we had gone astray. What, was that fact thus to be met? Was our self-will, our pride, our falsehood, our impurity, our indifference to God, our resistance to God, to be thus met? Was it to be met at all, and not rather left utterly alone to its own horrible issues? Was it eternally necessary that, if met, it must be met thus, by nothing less than the delivering up of Jesus our Lord? It was even so.

Assuredly if a milder expedient would have met our guilt, the FATHER would not have "delivered up" the SON. The Cross was nothing if not an absolute *sine quâ non*. There is that in sin, and in God, which made it eternally necessary that—if man was to be justified—the Son of God must not only live but die, and not only die but die thus, delivered up, given over to be done to death, as those who do great sin are done.

Deep in the heart of the divine doctrine of Atonement lies this element of it, the "*because of our transgressions*"; the exigency of Golgotha, due to our sins. The remission, the acquittal, the acceptance, was not a matter for the verbal *fiat* of divine autocracy. It was a matter not between God and creation, which to Him is "a little thing," but between God and His Law, that is to say, Himself, as He is eternal Judge. And this, to the Eternal, is *not* a little thing. So the solution called for no little thing, but for the Atoning Death, for the laying by the Father on the Son of the iniquities of us all, that we might open our arms and receive from the Father the merits of the Son.

"*And was raised up because of our justification;*" because our acceptance had been won, by His deliverance up. Such is the simplest explanation of the grammar, and of the import. The Lord's Resurrection appears as, so to speak, the mighty sequel, and also the demonstration, warrant, proclamation, of His acceptance as the Propitiation, and therefore of our acceptance in Him. For indeed it *was* our justification, when He paid our penalty. True, the acceptance does not accrue to the individual till he believes, and so receives. The gift is not put into the hand till it is open, and empty. But the gift has been bought ready for the

recipient long before he kneels to receive it. It was his, in provision, from the moment of the purchase; and the glorious Purchaser came up from the depths where He had gone down to buy, holding aloft in His sacred hands the golden Gift, ours because His for us.

A little while before he wrote to Rome, St Paul had written to Corinth, and the same truth was in his soul then, though it came out only passingly, while with infinite impressiveness. "If Christ is not risen, idle is your faith; you are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. xv. 17). That is to say, so the context irrefragably shews, you are yet in the guilt of your sins; you are still unjustified. "In your sins" cannot possibly there refer to the moral condition of the converts; for as a matter of fact, which no doctrine could negative, the Corinthians *were* "changed men." "In your sins" refers therefore to guilt, to law, to acceptance. And it bids them look to the Atonement as the objective *sine quâ non* for that, and to the Resurrection as the one possible, and the only necessary, warrant to faith that the Atonement had secured its end.

"*Who was delivered up; who was raised up.*" When? About twenty-five years before Paul sat dictating this sentence in the house of Gaius. There were at that moment about three hundred known living people, at least (1 Cor. xv. 6), who had seen the Risen One with open eyes, and heard Him with conscious ears. From one point of view, all was eternal, spiritual, invisible. From another point of view our salvation was as concrete, as historical, as much a thing of place and date, as the battle of Actium, or the death of Socrates. And what was done, remains done.

> "Can length of years on God Himself exact,
> And make that fiction which was once a fact?"

## CHAPTER XII

### *PEACE, LOVE, AND JOY FOR THE JUSTIFIED*

ROMANS V. 1-11

WE reached a pause in the Apostle's thought with the close of the last paragraph. We may reverently imagine, as in spirit we listen to his dictation, that a pause comes also in his work; that he is silent, and Tertius puts down the pen, and they spend their hearts awile on worshipping recollection and realization. The Lord delivered up; His people justified; the Lord risen again, alive for evermore—here was matter for love, joy, and wonder.

But the Letter must proceed, and the argument has its fullest and most wonderful developments yet to come. It has now already expounded the tremendous *need* of justifying mercy, for every soul of man. It has shewn how *faith*, always and only, is the way to appropriate that mercy—the way of God's will, and manifestly also in its own nature the way of deepest fitness. We have been allowed to see faith in illustrative action, in Abraham, who by faith, absolutely, without the least advantage of traditional privilege, received justification, with the vast concurrent blessings which it carried. Lastly we have heard St Paul dictate to Tertius, for the Romans and for us, those summarizing words (iv. 25) in which we now have God's own certifi-

cate of the triumphant efficacy of that Atoning Work, which sustains the Promise in order that the Promise may sustain us believing.

We are now to approach the glorious theme of the Life of the Justified. This is to be seen not only as a state whose basis is the reconciliation of the Law, and whose gate and walls are the covenant Promise. It is to appear as a state warmed with eternal Love; irradiated with the prospect of glory. In it the man, knit up with Christ his Head, his Bridegroom, his all, yields himself with joy to the God who has received him. In the living power of the heavenly Spirit, who perpetually delivers him from himself, he obeys, prays, works, and suffers, in a liberty which is only not yet that of heaven, and in which he is maintained to the end by Him who has planned his full personal salvation from eternity to eternity.

It has been the temptation of Christians sometimes to regard the truth and exposition of Justification as if there were a certain hardness and as it were dryness about it; as if it were a topic rather for the schools than for life. If excuses have ever been given for such a view, they must come from other quarters than the Epistle to the Romans. Christian teachers, of many periods, may have discussed Justification as coldly as if they were writing a law-book. Or again they may have examined it as if it were a truth terminating in itself, the Omega as well as the Alpha of salvation; and then it has been misrepresented, of course. For the Apostle certainly does not discuss it drily; he lays deep indeed the foundations of Law and Atonement, but he does it in the manner of a man who is not drawing the plan of a refuge, but calling his reader from the tempest into what is not only a refuge but a home.

And again he does not discuss it in isolation. He spends his fullest, largest, and most loving expositions on its intense and vital connexion with concurrent truths. He is about now to take us, through a noble vestibule, into the sanctuary of the life of the accepted, the life of union, of surrender, of the Holy Ghost.

Ver. 1. **Justified therefore on terms of faith,* we have peace † towards our (τὸν) God**, we possess in regard of Him the "quietness and assurance" of acceptance, **through our Lord Jesus Christ**, thus delivered up, and raised up, for us; **through whom we have**

Ver. 2. **actually (καὶ) found ‡ our (τὴν) introduction**, our free admission, **by our (τῇ) faith, into this grace**, this unearned acceptance for Another's sake, **in which we stand**, instead of falling ruined, sentenced, at the tribunal. **And we exult**, not with the sinful "boasting" § of the legalist, **but in hope** (literally, "*on hope*," ἐπ' ἐλπίδι, as *reposing on* the promised prospect) **of the glory of our (τοῦ) God**, the light of the heavenly vision and fruition of our Justifier, and the splendour of an eternal service of Him in that fruition. **Nor only so, but we**

Ver. 3. **exult too in our tribulations**, with a better fortitude than the Stoic's artificial serenity, **knowing that the tribulation works out, develops, patient persistency,** ‖ as it occasions proof after proof of the power

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* Ἐκ πίστεως: "*out of faith.*" The phrase has often met us in the Greek before. It calls for various renderings in various contexts; that given above seems best to paraphrase it here.

† See detached note, p. 140, for an account of the various reading here, ἔχωμεν εἰρήνην, "*Let us* have peace."

‡ Ἐσχήκαμεν: "*we have had*," "*we have got.*"

§ Καυχᾶσθαι, καύχησις: see above ii. 23, iii. 27, iv. 2.

‖ Ὑπομονὴ is more than "*patience.*" By usage it implies "patience *in action*"; "*perseverance.*"

of God in our weakness, and thus generates *the habit* of reliance; **and then** (δὲ) **the patient persistency** develops **proof,** brings out in experience, as a proved fact, that through Christ we are not what we were; **and then the proof** develops **hope,** solid and definite expectation of continuing grace and final glory, and, in particular, of the Lord's Return; **and the hope does not shame,** does not disappoint; it is a hope sure and steadfast, for it is the hope of those who now know that they are objects of eternal Love; **because the love of our** (τοῦ) **God has been poured out in our hearts;** His love to us has been as it were diffused through our consciousness, poured out in a glad experience as rain from the cloud, as floods from the rising spring,* **through the Holy Spirit that was given to us.**

Here first is mentioned explicitly, in the Apostle's argument, (we do not reckon ch. i. 4 as in the argument,) the blessed Spirit, the Lord the Holy Ghost. Hitherto the occasion for the mention has hardly arisen. The considerations have been mainly upon the personal guilt of the sinner, and the objective fact of the Atonement, and the exercise of faith, of trust in God, as a genuine personal act of man. With a definite purpose, we may reverently think, the discussion of faith has been kept thus far clear of the thought of anything lying behind faith, of any "grace" *giving* faith. For whether or no faith is the gift of God, it is most certainly the act of man; none should assert this more decidedly than

* It is quite possible, of course, to explain ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ, grammatically, to mean "*our love to God.*" And some, more mystically, explain it of God's faculty of love conveyed to us that we, with it, may love Him. But the following context, especially ver. 8, is clearly against such expositions. Verses 6-11 are in fact an explanation of the thought of ver. 5.

those who hold (as we do) that Eph. ii. 8 * *does* teach that where saving faith is, it is there because God has "given" it. But how does He "give" it? Not, surely, by implanting a new faculty, but by so opening the soul to God in Christ that the divine magnet effectually draws the man to a willing repose upon such a God. But the man does this, as an act, himself. He trusts God as genuinely, as personally, as much with his own faculty of trust, as he trusts a man whom he sees to be quite trustworthy and precisely fit to meet an imperative need. Thus it is often the work of the evangelist and the teacher to insist upon the *duty* rather than the *grace* of faith; to bid men rather thank God for faith *when they have believed* than wait for the sense of an afflatus before believing. And is this not what St Paul does here? At this point of his argument, *and not before*, he reminds the believer that his possession of peace, of happiness, of hope, has been attained and realized not, ultimately, of himself but through the working of the Eternal Spirit. The insight into mercy, into a propitiation provided by divine love, and so into the holy secret of the divine love itself, has been given him by the Holy Ghost, who has taken of the things of Christ, and shewn them to him, and secretly handled his "heart" so that the fact of the love of God is a part of experience at last. The man has been told of his great need, and of the sure and open refuge, and has stepped through its peaceful gate in the act of trusting the message and the will of God. Now he is asked to look round, to look back, and bless the hand which, when he was outside in the

* The writer ventures to refer to his Commentary on Ephesians in *The Cambridge Bible.*

naked field of death, opened his eyes to see, and guided his will to choose.

What a retrospect it is! Let us trace it from the first words of this paragraph again. First, here is the *sure fact* of our acceptance, and the reason of it, and the method. "*Therefore*"; let not that word be forgotten. Our Justification is no arbitrary matter, whose causelessness suggests an illusion, or a precarious peace. "*Therefore*"; it rests upon an antecedent, in the logical chain of divine facts. We have read that antecedent, ch. iv. 25; "Jesus our Lord was given up because of our transgressions, and was raised up because of our justification." We assented to that fact; we have accepted Him, only and altogether, in this work of His. *Therefore* we are justified, δικαιωθέντες,* placed by an act of divine Love, working in the line of divine Law, among those whom the Judge accepts, that He may embrace them as Father. Then, in this possession of the "peace" of our acceptance, thus *led in* (προσαγωγή), through the gate of the promise, with the footstep of faith, we find inside our Refuge far more than merely safety. We look up from within the blessed walls, sprinkled with atoning blood, and we see above them the hope of glory, invisible outside. And we turn to our present life within them (for all our life is to be lived within that broad sanctuary now), and we find resources provided there for a present as well as a prospective joy. We address ourselves to the discipline of the place; for it *has* its discipline; the refuge is home, but it is also school; and we find, when we begin to try it, that the discipline is full of joy. It brings out into a joyful consciousness the power we now have, in Him

* Observe the aorist form of the participle.

who has accepted us, in Him who is our Acceptance, to suffer and to serve in love. Our life has become a life not of peace only but of the hope which animates peace, and makes it flow "as a river." From hour to hour we enjoy the never-disappointing hope of "grace for grace," new grace for the next new need; and beyond it, and above it, the certainties of the hope of glory. To drop our metaphor of the sanctuary for that of the pilgrimage, we find ourselves upon a pathway, steep and rocky, but always mounting into purer air, and so as to shew us nobler prospects; and at the summit—the pathway will be continued, and transfigured, into the golden street of the City; the same track, but within the gate of heaven.

Into all this the Holy Ghost has led us. He has been at the heart of the whole internal process. He made the thunder of the Law articulate to our conscience. He gave us faith by manifesting Christ. And, in Christ, He has "poured out in our hearts the love of God."

For now the Apostle takes up that word, "*the Love of God*," and holds it to our sight, and we see in its pure glory no vague abstraction, but the face, and the work, of Jesus Christ. Such is the context into which we now advance. He is reasoning on; "*For* Christ, when we still were weak." He has set justification before us in its majestic lawfulness. But he has now to expand its mighty love, of which the Holy Ghost has made us conscious in our hearts. We are to see in the Atonement not only a guarantee that we have a valid title to a just acceptance. We are to see in it the love of the Father and the Son, so that not our security only but our bliss may be full.

Ver. 6. **For Christ, we still being weak,** (gentle euphemism for our utter impotence, our guilty inability to meet the sinless claim of the Law of God,) **in season,** in the fulness of time, when the ages of precept and of failure had done their work, and man had learnt something to purpose of the lesson of self-despair, **for the ungodly—died.** "*For the ungodly,*" *ὑπὲρ ἀσεβῶν,* "*concerning them,*" "with reference to them," that is to say, in this context of saving mercy, "in their interests, for their rescue,* as their propitiation." "*The ungodly,*" or, more literally still, without the article, "*ungodly ones*"; a designation general and inclusive for those for whom He died. Above (iv. 5) we saw the word used with a certain limitation, as of the worst among the sinful. But here, surely, with a solemn paradox, it covers the whole field of the Fall. The ungodly here are not the flagrant and disreputable only; they are all who are not in harmony with God; the potential as well as the actual doers of grievous sin. For them "*Christ died*"; not "lived," let us remember, but "died." It was a question not of example, nor of suasion, nor even of utterances of divine compassion. It was a question of law and guilt; and it was to be met only by the death-sentence and the death-fact; such death as HE died of whom, a little while before, this same Correspondent had written to the converts of

* Ὑπὲρ is literally "*over,*" and in itself imports simply "*concern with*"; as when we say that a man is busy "over" an important matter; as it were stooping over it, attending to it. Its special references depend altogether upon context and usage. *In itself* it neither teaches nor denies the doctrine of a vicarious and substitutionary work; *ἀντὶ* is the preposition which guarantees as true that great aspect of the Lord's death. But *ὑπὲρ* of course amply allows for such an *application* of its meaning, where the context suggests the idea.

Galatia (iii. 13); "Christ bought us out from the curse of the Law, when He became a curse for us." All the untold emphasis of the sentence, and of the thought, lies here upon those last words, upon each and all of them, "*for ungodly ones—He died*," ὑπὲρ ἀσεβῶν—ἀπέθανε. The sequel shews this to us; he proceeds: **For scarcely,**

Ver. 7. with difficulty, and in rare instances, **for a just man will one die**; "*scarcely*," he will not say "*never*," **for for the good man,** the man answering in some measure the ideal of gracious and not only of legal

Ver. 8. goodness,* **perhaps someone actually ventures to die. But God commends,** as by a glorious contrast (συνίστησι), **His love,** "*His*" as above all current human love, "*His own love*," τὴν Ἑαυτοῦ, **towards us, because while we were still sinners,** and as such repulsive to the Holy One, **Christ for us did die.**

We are not to read this passage as if it were a statistical assertion as to the facts of human love and its possible sacrifices. The moral argument will not be affected if we are able, as we shall be, to adduce cases where unregenerate man has given even his life to save the life of one, or of many, to whom he is not emotionally or naturally attracted. All that is necessary to St Paul's tender plea for the love of God is the certain fact that the cases of death even on behalf of one who *morally deserves* a great sacrifice are relatively very, very few. The thought of merit is the ruling thought in the connexion. He labours to bring out the sovereign Lovingkindness, which went even to the length and depth of death, by reminding us that, what-

* We incline more than formerly, though still with some doubt, to see a rising climax here, as indicated in the paraphrase, from δίκαιος to ὁ ἀγαθός.

ever moved it, it was not moved, even in the lowest imaginable degree, by any merit, no, nor by any "congruity," in us. And yet we were sought, and saved. He who planned the salvation, and provided it, was the eternal Lawgiver and Judge. He who loved us is Himself eternal Right, to whom all our wrong is unutterably repellent. What then is He as Love, who, being also Right, stays not till He has given His Son to the death of the Atonement?

So we have indeed a warrant to "believe the love of God" (1 John iv. 16). Yes, to believe it. We look within us, and it is incredible. If we have really seen ourselves, we have seen ground for a sorrowful conviction that He who is eternal Right must view us with aversion. But if we have really seen Christ, we have seen ground for—not feeling at all, it may be, at this moment, but—believing that God is Love, and loves us. What is it to believe Him? It is to take Him at His word; to act altogether not upon our internal consciousness but upon His warrant. We look at the Cross, or rather, we look at the crucified Lord Jesus in His Resurrection; we read at His feet these words of His Apostle; and we go away to take God at His assurance that we, unlovely, are beloved.

"My child," said a dying French saint, as she gave a last embrace to her daughter, "I have loved you because of what you are; my heavenly Father, to whom I go, has loved me *malgrè moi*."

And how does the divine reasoning now advance? "From glory to glory"; from acceptance by the Holy One, who is Love, to present and endless preservation in His Beloved One. **Therefore much more, justified now in His blood,** as it were "*in*" its laver of ablution, or again "*within*" its circle of

Ver. 9.

sprinkling as it marks the precincts of our inviolable sanctuary, **we shall be kept safe through Him,** who now lives to administer the blessings of His death, **from the wrath,** the wrath of God, in its present imminence over the head of the unreconciled, and in its final fall "in that day." **For if, being enemies,** with no initial love to Him who is Love, nay, when we were hostile to His claims, and as such subject to the hostility of His Law, **we were reconciled to our** (*τῷ*) **God** * **through the death of His Son,** (God coming to judicial peace with us, and we brought to submissive peace with Him,) **much more, being reconciled, we shall be kept safe in His life,** in the life of the Risen One who now lives for us, and in us, and we in Him. **Nor only so, but** we shall be kept **exulting too in our** (*τοῦ*) **God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom now we have received** † **this** (*τὴν*) **reconciliation.**

Ver. 10.

Ver. 11.

Here, by anticipation, he indicates already the mighty issues of the act of Justification, in our life of Union with the Lord who died for us, and lived again. In the sixth chapter this will be more fully unfolded; but he cannot altogether reserve it so long. As he has advanced from the law-aspect of our acceptance to its love-aspect, so now with this latter he gives us at once the life-aspect, our vital incorporation with our Redeemer, our part and lot in His resurrection-life. Nowhere in this whole Epistle is that subject expounded so fully as in the later Epistles, Colossians and Ephesians; the Inspirer led His servant all over that region then, in his Roman prison, but not now. But He had brought him into the region from the first, and we see it here

* On the meaning of *καταλλαγή* see detached note, p. 141.

† *Ἐλάβομεν*: but the English perfect best represents the idea.

present to his thought, though not in the foreground of his discourse. "*Kept safe in His life*"; not "*by*" His life, but "*in*" His life. We are livingly knit to Him the Living One. From one point of view we are accused men, at the bar, wonderfully transformed, by the Judge's provision, into welcomed and honoured friends of the Law and the Lawgiver. From another point of view we are dead men, in the grave, wonderfully vivified, and put into a spiritual connexion with the mighty life of our Lifegiving Redeemer. The aspects are perfectly distinct. They belong to different orders of thought. Yet they are in the closest and most genuine relation. The Justifying Sacrifice procures the possibility of our regeneration into the Life of Christ. Our union by faith with the Lord who died and lives brings us into actual part and lot in His justifying merits. And our part and lot in those merits, our "acceptance in the Beloved," assures us again of the permanence of the mighty Love which will maintain us in our part and lot "in His life." This is the view of the matter which is before us here.

Thus the Apostle meets our need on every side. He shews us the holy Law satisfied for us. He shews us the eternal Love liberated upon us. He shews us the Lord's own Life clasped around us, imparted to us; "our life is hid in God with Christ, who is our Life" (Col. iii. 3, 4). Shall we not "exult in God through Him"?

And now we are to learn something of that great Covenant-Headship, in which we and He are one.

## Detached Notes to Chapter XII

### I

*Εἰρήνην ἔχομεν*, "*We have peace*": *Εἰρήνην ἔχωμεν*, "*Let us have peace.*" Which did St Paul write? On the whole, after long thought upon the evidence, we decide for the former reading. The documentary witness is strong for the latter. For those who place the great Uncial manuscripts in the place of practical decision, *ἔχωμεν* has a clear verdict in its favour. But the other class of copies, the Cursive, later on the whole than the Uncials, but probably often representing correction rather than corruption, are greatly in favour of *ἔχομεν*. The evidence of ancient Versions, and of quotations by early Christian writers, inclines on the whole for *ἔχωμεν*. But in the study of a reading the argument and context of course claim attention; for most surely the original reading, whatever it was, was *pertinent*. Now here the question of *pertinence* seems to us to lead to a decided verdict for *ἔχομεν*. The Apostle is engaged here altogether with assertion, instruction; exhortation is to come later. Through this whole paragraph he does nothing but assert facts and principles. Is it to be believed that he begins it with a *disjointed* exhortation?

In *itself* the exhortation would bear a meaning perfectly intelligible. "*Let us have peace*" would mean "*Let us enjoy peace.*" So *ἔχωμεν χάριν*, Heb. xii. 28, means, practically, "*Let us use grace.*" Neither exhortation would mean that we *do not yet possess*, in respect of the Lord's gift, "peace" and "grace" res-

pectively. But, we repeat it, the context here seems decisive against the presence *here* of any exhortation. We want, logically, assertion.

The interchange of ω and ο in manuscripts is, as a fact, frequent.

See the case carefully considered, and decided for ἔχομεν, in Dr Scrivener's *Introduction to the Criticism of the N. T.*, p. 625.

## II

*Καταλλάσσειν, Καταλλαγή.* It is sometimes held that these words denote "reconciliation" in the sense of man's laying aside his distrust, reluctance, resistance towards God, not of God's laying aside His holy displeasure against man; and that for this latter idea, that of persuading an offended superior to grant peace, we should need the words διαλλάσσεσθαι (which we have Matt. v. 24, and in the Lxx. in *e.g.* 1 Sam. xxix. 4, where the English has, "Wherewith should he reconcile himself to his master?") and διαλλαγὴ (which does not occur in the N. T.). But καταλλαγὴ (and its verb) is as a fact used in the Greek of the Apocrypha in connexions where the thought is just that of the clemency of a king, induced to pardon. See *e.g.* 2 Macc. v. 20, where the English Version reads, "the great Lord *being reconciled* (ἐν τῇ καταλλαγῇ τοῦ μεγάλου Δεσπότου) [the temple] was set up." So 2 Macc. i. 5, where we have the prayer (English Version), "God be *at one* with you," καταλλαγείη ὑμῖν. Thus no elaborate distinction can safely be drawn between the two sets of compounds. And there is no place in the N. T. where the meaning, *conciliation of an offended party*, would not well suit καταλλάσσεσθαι, etc. The present passage

(Rom. v. 10, 11) would be practically meaningless otherwise. The whole thought is of the divine mercy, providing a way for accepting grace. To "*receive* τὴν καταλλαγὴν" is a phrase which, by its very form as well as its connexion, points to the thought not of reluctance overcome but mercy found.

The word "*atonement*" (A.V., ver. 11) needs remark. It seems certain that its derivation is "at-one-ment" (See Skeat, *Etymol. Dict.*, s.v.), though an etymological connexion with *ver-söhnen*, (Dutch, *ver-zoenen*) has been maintained (see Hofmeyr, *The Blessed Life*, p. 25). But as Trench remarks, (*Synonyms of the N. T.*, s.v. καταλλαγὴ,) the usage of English has now long attached the idea of *propitiation* (ἱλασμὸς) to the word "*atonement*"; which should therefore be avoided as a rendering for καταλλαγή.

## CHAPTER XIII

### *CHRIST AND ADAM*

ROMANS V. 12-21

WE approach a paragraph of the Epistle pregnant with mystery. It leads us back to Primal Man, to the Adam of the first brief pages of the Scripture record, to his encounter with the suggestion to follow himself rather than his Maker, to his sin, and then to the results of that sin in his race. We shall find those results given in terms which certainly we should not have devised *à priori*. We shall find the Apostle teaching, or rather stating, for he writes as to those who know, that mankind inherits from primal Man, tried and fallen, not only taint but guilt, not only moral hurt but legal fault.

This is "a thing heard in the darkness." It has been said that Holy Scripture "is not a sun, but a lamp." The words may be grievously misused, by undue emphasis on the negative clause; but they convey a sure truth, used aright. Nowhere does the divine Book undertake to tell us all about everything it contains. It undertakes to tell us truth, and to tell it from God. It undertakes to give us pure light, yea, "to bring life and immortality out into the light," (2 Tim. i. 10). But it reminds us that we know "in part," and that even prophecy, even the inspired

message, is "in part" (1 Cor. xiii. 9). It illuminates immensely much, but it leaves yet more to be seen hereafter. It does not yet kindle the whole firmament and the whole landscape like an oriental sun. It sheds its glory upon our Guide, and upon our path.

A passage like this calls for such recollections. It tells us, with the voice of the Apostle's Lord, great facts about our own race, and its relations to its primeval Head, such that every individual man has a profound moral and also judicial *nexus* with the first Man. It does not tell us how those inscrutable but solid facts fit into the whole plan of God's creative wisdom and moral government. The lamp shines *there*, upon the edges of a deep ravine beside the road; it does not shine sunlike over the whole mountain-land.

As with other mysteries which will meet us later, so with this; we approach it as those who "know in part," and who know that the apostolic Prophet, by no defect of inspiration, but by the limits of the case, "prophesies in part." Thus with awful reverence, with godly fear, and free from the wish to explain away, yet without anxiety lest God should be proved unrighteous, we listen as Paul dictates, and receive his witness about our fall and our guilt in that mysterious "First Father."

We remember also another fact of this case. This paragraph deals only incidentally with Adam; its main theme is Christ. Adam is the illustration; Christ is the subject. We are to be shewn in Adam, by contrast, some of "the unsearchable riches of Christ." So that our main attention is called not to the brief outline of the mystery of the Fall, but to the assertions of the related splendour of the Redemption.

St Paul is drawing again to a close, a cadence. He

is about to conclude his exposition of the Way of Acceptance, and to pass to its junction with the Way of Holiness. And he shews us here last, in the matter of Justification, this fragment from "the bottoms of the mountains"—the union of the justified with their redeeming Lord as race with Head; the *nexus* in that respect between them and Him which makes His "righteous act" of such infinite value to them. In the previous paragraph, as we have seen, he has gravitated toward the deeper regions of the blessed subject; he has indicated our connexion with the Lord's Life as well as with His Merit. Now, recurring to the thought of the Merit, he still tends to the depths of truth, and Christ our Righteousness is lifted before our eyes from those pure depths as not the Propitiation only, but the Propitiation who is also our Covenant-Head, our Second Adam, holding His mighty merits for a new race, bound up with Himself in the bond of a real unity.

He "prophesies in part," meanwhile, even in respect of this element of his message. As we saw just above, the fullest explanations of our union with the Lord Christ *in His life* were reserved by St Paul's Master for other Letters than this. In the present passage we have not, what probably we should have had if the Epistle had been written five years later, a definite statement of the connexion between our Union with Christ in His covenant and our Union with Him in His life; a connexion deep, necessary, significant. It is not quite absent from this passage, if we read verses 17, 18, aright; but it is not prominent. The main thought is of merit, righteousness, acceptance; of covenant, of law. As we have said, this paragraph is the climax of the Epistle to the Romans as to its doctrine of our peace with God through the merits of His Son. It is

enough for the purpose of that subject that it should indicate, and only indicate, the doctrine that His Son is also our Life, our indwelling Cause and Spring of purity and power.

Recollecting thus the scope and the connexion of the passage, let us listen to its wording.

Ver. 12. **On this account,** on account of the aspects of our justification and reconciliation "through our Lord Jesus Christ" which he has just presented, it is* **just as through one man sin entered into the world,** the world of man, **and, through sin, death, and so to all men death travelled,** διῆλθε, penetrated, pervaded, **inasmuch as all sinned**; the Race sinning in its Head, the Nature in its representative Bearer. The facts of human life and death shew that sin *did* thus pervade the race, as to liability, and as to penalty: **For**

Ver. 13. **until law came sin was in the world**; it was present all along, in the ages previous to the great Legislation. **But sin is not imputed,** is not put down as debt for penalty, **where law does not exist,** where in no sense is there statute to be obeyed or broken, whether that statute takes articulate expression or not.†

Ver. 14. **But death became king** (ἐβασίλευσεν), **from Adam down to Moses, even over those who did not sin on the model of the transgression of Adam—who is** (in the

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* It will be seen that we assume, between διὰ τοῦτο and ὥσπερ, some such implied thought as "*the case stands.*" We think it may be thus grammatically; and that even if a less simple explanation of the *construction* is adopted, such an insertion gives the import of the whole passage aright.

† It will be seen that the rapid steps of thought lead, in this one verse, from one meaning of the word "*law*" to another. He means that there was sin before the Code of the Decalogue, but not therefore before God had, in some degree, expressed His royal will, and man had broken it.

present tense of the plan of God) **pattern of the Coming One.**

He argues from the fact of death, and from its universality, which implies a universality of liability, of guilt. According to the Scriptures, death is essentially *penal* in the case of man, who was created not to die but to live. How that purpose would have been fulfilled if "the image of God" had not sinned against Him, we do not know. We need not think that the fulfilment would have violated any natural process; higher processes might have governed the case, in perfect harmony with the surroundings of terrestrial life, till perhaps that life was transfigured, as by a necessary development, into the celestial and immortal. But however, the record *does* connect, for man, the fact of death with the fact of sin, offence, transgression. And the fact of death is universal, and so has been from the first. And thus it includes generations most remote from the knowledge of a revealed *code*. And it includes individuals most incapable of a conscious act of transgression such as Adam's was; it includes the heathen, and the infant, and the imbecile. Therefore wherever there is human nature, since Adam fell, there is sin, in its form of guilt. And therefore, in some sense which perhaps only the supreme Theologian Himself fully knows, but which we can follow a little way, all men offended in the First Man—so favourably conditioned, so gently tested. The guilt contracted by him is possessed also by them. And thus is he "the pattern of the Coming One."

For now the glorious Coming One, the Seed of the Woman, the blessed Lord of the Promise, rises on the view, in His likeness and in His contrast. Writing to Corinth from Macedonia, about a year before, St Paul

had called him (1 Cor. xv. 45, 47) "the Second Adam," "the Second Man"; and had drawn in outline the parallel he here elaborates. "In Adam all die; even so in Christ all shall be made alive." It was a thought which he had learned in Judaism,* but which his Master had affirmed to him in Christianity; and noble indeed and far-reaching is its use of it in this exposition of the sinner's hope.

Ver. 15. **But not as the transgression, so the gracious gift** (χάρισμα). **For if, by the transgression of the one, the many,** the many affected by it, **died, much rather did the grace of God,** His benignant action, **and the gift,** the grant of our acceptance, **in the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ,** ("*in* His grace," because *involved in* His benignant action, in His redeeming work) **abound unto the many** whom it, whom He, affected.

We observe here some of the phrases in detail. "*The One*"; "*the One Man*":—"*the* one," in each case, is related to "*the* many" involved, in bane or in blessing respectively. "The One *Man*":—so the Second Adam is designated, not the First. As to the First, "it goes unsaid" that he is man. As to the Second, it is infinitely wonderful, and of eternal import, that He, as truly, as completely, is one with us, is Man of men. "*Much rather did* the grace, and the gift, *abound*":—the thought given here is that while the dread sequel of the Fall was solemnly *permitted*, as good in law, the sequel of the divine counter-work was gladly *sped* by the Lord's willing love, and was carried to a glorious overflow, to an altogether unmerited effect, in the

* See Schöttgen, *Horæ Hebraicæ*, on 1 Cor. xv. 45. He quotes from the Rabbis: "As the First Adam was one, was first, אחר, in sin, so Messiah shall be the last, האחרן, for the utter taking away of sins."

present and eternal blessing of the justified. "*The many*," twice mentioned in this verse, are the whole company which, in each case, stands related to the respective Representative. It is the whole race in the case of the Fall; it is the "many brethren" of the Second Adam in the case of the Reconciliation. The question is not of numerical comparison between the two, but of the numerousness of each host in relation to the oneness of its covenant Head. What the numerousness of the "many brethren" will be we know—and we do not know; for it will be "a great multitude, which no one can number." But that is not in the question here. The emphasis, the "*much rather*," the "*abundance*," lies not on the compared numbers, but on the amplitude of the blessing which overflows upon "the many" from the justifying work of the One.

He proceeds, developing the thought. From the act of each Representative, from Adam's Fall and Christ's Atonement, there issued results of dominion, of royalty. But what was the contrast of the cases! In the Fall, the sin of the One brought upon "the many" judgment, sentence, and the reign of death over them. In the Atonement, the righteousness of the One brought upon "the many" an "abundance," an overflow, a generous largeness and love of acceptance, and the power of life eternal, and a prerogative of royal rule over sin and death; the emancipated captives treading upon their tyrants' necks. We follow out the Apostle's wording:

Ver. 16. **And not as through** the **one who sinned,** who fell, **so is the gift**; our acceptance in our Second Head does not follow the law of mere and strict retribution which appears in our fall in our first Head.

(**For**, he adds in emphatic parenthesis, **the judgment** did issue, **from one** transgression,* **in condemnation**, in sentence of death; **but the gracious gift** issued, **from many transgressions**,—not indeed as if earned by them, as if caused by them, but as *occasioned* by them; for this wonderful process of mercy found in our sins, as well as in our Fall, a *reason* for the Cross—**in a deed**
Ver. 17. **of justification.**)† **For if in one transgression**,‡ "*in*" it, as the effect is involved in its cause, **death came to reign** (ἐβασίλευσε) **through the one** offender,§ **much rather those who are receiving**, in their successive cases and generations, **that** (τὴν) **abundance of the grace** just spoken of (ver. 15: χάρις, ἐπερίσσευσε), **and of the free gift of righteousness**, of acceptance, **shall, in life**, life eternal, begun now, to end never, **reign** over their former tyrants **through the One**, their glorious One, **Jesus Christ.**

And now he sums up the whole in one comprehensive inference and affirmation. "*The One*," "*the many*"; "*the One*," "*the all*"; the whole mercy for the all due to the one work of the One;—such is the ground-thought all along. It is illustrated by "*the one*" and "*the many*" of the Fall, but still so as to throw the real weight of every word not upon the Fall but upon

* So we interpret ἑνὸς, in the light of the πολλὰ παραπτώματα just below.

† Δικαίωμα: the form of the word indicates not a process, or a principle, but an act. Apparently, by context, it may mean either a moral act of righteousness (see Rev. xix. 8, and perhaps below, ver. 18), or a legal "act and deed" of acceptance. The parallel with κατάκριμα pleads here for the latter.

‡ We adopt the reading ἐν ἑνί. The other, τῷ τοῦ ἑνὸς, amounts to the same import, but without the pregnant force of the word "*in*."

§ We supply this word, and not "*transgression*," because of the parallel just below, "*the One, Jesus Christ*."

the Acceptance. Here, as throughout this paragraph, we should greatly mistake if we thought that the illustration and the object illustrated were to be pressed, detail by detail, into one mould. To cite an instance to the contrary, we are certainly not to take him to mean that because Adam's "*many*" are not only fallen in him, but actually guilty, therefore Christ's "*many*" are not only accepted in Him, but actually and personally meritorious of acceptance. The whole Epistle negatives that thought. Nor again are we to think, as we ponder ver. 18, that because "*the condemnation*" was "*to all men*" in the sense of their being not only condemnable but actually condemned, therefore "*the justification of life*" was "*to all men*" in the sense that all mankind are actually justified. Here again the whole Epistle, and the whole message of St Paul about our acceptance, are on the other side. The provision is for the *genus*, for man; but the possession is for men—who believe.* No; these great details in the parallel need our reverent caution, lest we think peace where there is, and can be, none. The force of the parallel lies in the broader and deeper factors of the two matters. It lies in the mysterious phenomenon of covenant headship, as affecting both our Fall and our Acceptance; in the power upon the many, in each case, of the deed of the One; and then

* As to the universality of *the offer*, it is interesting and important to find Calvin thus writing, on ver. 18:—Communem omnium gratiam fecit, quia omnibus exposita est, non quod ad omnes extendatur re ipsa. Nam etsi passus est Christus pro peccatis totius mundi, atque omnibus indifferenter Dei benignitate offertur, non tamen omnes apprehendunt. "The Lord," thus says the great French expositor, "suffered for the sins of the whole world," and "is offered impartially to all in the kindness of God."

in the magnificent fulness and positiveness of result in the case of our salvation. In our Fall, sin merely *worked itself out* into doom and death. In our Acceptance, the Judge's award is positively crowned and as it were loaded with gifts and treasures. It brings with it, in ways not described here, but amply shewn in other Scriptures, a living union with a Head who is our life, and in whom we possess already the powers of heavenly being in their essence. It brings with it not only the approval of the Law, but accession to a throne. The justified sinner is a king already, in his Head, over the power of sin, over the fear of death. And he is on his way to a royalty in the eternal future which shall make him great indeed, great in his Lord.

The absolute dependence of our justification upon the Atoning Act of our Head, and the relation of our Head to us accordingly as our Centre and our Root of blessing, this is the main message of the passage we are tracing. The mystery of our congenital guilt is there, though it is only incidentally there. And after all what is that mystery? It is assuredly a fact. The statement of this paragraph, that the many were "constituted sinners by the disobedience of the one," what is it? It is the Scripture expression, and in some guarded sense the Scripture explanation, of a consciousness deep as the awakened soul of man; that I, a member of this homogeneous race, made in God's image, not only have sinned, but have been a sinful being from my first personal beginning; and that I ought not to be so, and ought never to have been so. It is my calamity, but it is also my accusation. This I cannot explain; but this I know. And to know this, with a knowledge that is not merely speculative but

moral, is to be "shut up unto Christ," in a self-despair which can go nowhere else than to Him for acceptance, for peace, for holiness, for power.

Let us translate, as they stand, the closing sentences before us:

Ver. 18. **Accordingly therefore, as through one transgression** there came a result **to all men, to condemnation,** to sentence of death, **so through one deed of righteousness** * **there came a result to all men,** (to "*all*" in the sense we have indicated, so that whoever of mankind receives the acceptance owes it always and wholly to the Act of Christ,) **to justification of life,** to an acceptance which not only bids the guilty "not die," but opens to the accepted the secret, in Him who is their Sacrifice, of powers which live in Him for them as He is their Life.

Ver. 19. **For as, by the disobedience of the one man, the many,** the many of that case, **were constituted sinners,** constituted guilty of the fall of their nature from God, so that their being sinful is not only their calamity but their sin, **so too by the obedience of the One,** "not according to their works," that is, to their conduct, past, present, or to come, but "*by the obedience of the One*," **the many,** His "many brethren," His Father's children through faith in Him, **shall be,** as each comes to Him in all time, and then by the final open proclamation of eternity, **constituted righteous,** qualified for the acceptance of the holy Judge.

Before he closes this page of his message, and turns the next, he has as it were a parenthetic word to say,

* Δικαίωμα: see note above, p. 150. It seems to us almost equally possible to explain this word here (as in our translation) of the Lord's Atoning Act, satisfying the Law for us, and of the Accepting "Act and Deed" of the Father, declaring Him accepted, and us in Him.

indicating a theme to be discussed more largely later. It is the function of the Law, the moral place of the preceptive *Fiat*, in view of this wonderful Acceptance of the guilty. He has suggested the question already, iii. 31 ; he will treat some aspects of it more fully later. But it is urgent here to enquire at least this, Was Law a mere anomaly, impossible to put into relation with justifying grace? Might it have been as well out of the way, never heard of in the human world? No, God forbid. One deep purpose of acceptance was to glorify the Law, making the preceptive Will of God as dear to the justified as it is terrible to the guilty. But now, besides this, it has a function antecedent as well as consequent to justification. Applied as positive precept to the human will in the Fall, what does it do? It does not create sinfulness ; God forbid. Not God's will but the creature's will did that. But it occasions sin's declaration of war. It brings out the latent rebellion of the will. It forces the disease to the surface—merciful force, for it shews the sick man his danger, and it gives point to his Physician's words of warning and of hope. It reveals to the criminal his guilt ; as it is sometimes found that information of a statutory human penalty awakens a malefactor's conscience in the midst of a half-unconscious course of crime. And so it brings out to the opening eyes of the soul the wonder of the remedy in Christ. He sees the Law ; he sees himself ; and now at last it becomes a profound reality to him to see the Cross. He believes, adores, and loves. The merit of his Lord covers his demerit, as the waters the sea. And he passes from the dread but salutary view of "the reign" of sin over him, in a death he cannot fathom, to submit to "the reign" of grace, in life, in death, for ever.

Ver. 20. **Now law came sideways in**; law in its largest sense, as it affects the fallen, but with a special reference, doubtless, to its articulation at Sinai. It came in "*sideways*," as to its relation to our acceptance; as a thing which should *indirectly* promote it, by not causing but occasioning the blessing; **that the transgression might abound**, that sin, that sins, in the most inclusive sense, might develop the latent evil, and as it were expose it to the work of grace. **But where the sin multiplied**, in the place, the region, of fallen humanity, **there did superabound the grace**; with that mighty overflow of the bright ocean of love which we have watched already.

Ver. 21. **That just as our (ἡ) sin came to reign in our (τῷ) death**, our penal death, **so too might the grace come to reign**, having its glorious way against our foes and over us, **through righteousness**, through the justifying work, **to life eternal**, which here we have, and which hereafter will receive us into itself, **through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

"The last words of Mr Honest were, *Grace reigns.* So he left the world." Let us walk with the same watchword through the world, till we too, crossing that Jordan, lean with a final simplicity of faith upon "the obedience of the One."

## CHAPTER XIV

### *JUSTIFICATION AND HOLINESS*

ROMANS vi. 1-13

IN a certain sense, St Paul has done now with the exposition of Justification. He has brought us on, from his denunciation of human sin, and his detection of the futility of mere privilege, to propitiation, to faith, to acceptance, to love, joy, and hope, and finally to our mysterious but real connexion in all this blessing with Him who won our peace. From this point onwards we shall find many mentions of our acceptance, and of its Cause; we shall come to some memorable mentions very soon. But we shall not hear the holy subject itself any more treated and expounded. It will underlie the following discussions everywhere; it will as it were surround them, as with a sanctuary wall. But we shall now think less directly of the foundations than of the superstructure, for which the foundation was laid. We shall be less occupied with the fortifications of our holy city than with the resources they contain, and with the life which is to be lived, on those resources, within the walls.

Everything will cohere. But the transition will be marked, and will call for our deepest, and let us add, our most reverent and supplicating thought.

"We need not, then, be holy, if such is your pro-

gramme of acceptance." Such was the objection, bewildered or deliberate, which St Paul heard in his soul at this pause in his dictation; he had doubtless often heard it with his ears. Here was a wonderful provision for the free and full acceptance of "the ungodly" by the eternal Judge. It was explained and stated so as to leave no room for human virtue as a commendatory merit. Faith itself was no commendatory virtue. It was not "a work," but the antithesis to "works." Its power was not in itself but in its Object. It was itself only the void which received "the obedience of the One" as the sole meriting cause of peace with God. Then—may we not live on in sin, and yet be in His favour now, and in His heaven hereafter?

Let us recollect, as we pass on, one important lesson of these recorded objections to the great first message of St Paul. They tell us, incidentally, how explicit and unreserved his delivery of the message had been, and how Justification by Faith, by faith only, meant what was said, when it was said by him. Christian thinkers, of more schools than one, and at many periods, have hesitated not a little over that point. The medieval theologian mingled his thoughts of Justification with those of Regeneration, and taught our acceptance accordingly on lines impossible to lay true along those of St Paul. In later days, the meaning of faith has been sometimes beclouded, till it has seemed, through the haze, to be only an indistinct summary-word for Christian consistency, for exemplary conduct, for good works. Now supposing either of these lines of teaching, or anything like them, to be the message of St Paul, "his Gospel," as he preached it; one result may be reasonably inferred—that we should

not have had Rom. vi. 1 worded as it is. Whatever objections were encountered by a Gospel of acceptance expounded on such lines, (and no doubt it would have encountered many, if it called sinful men to holiness,) it would not have encountered this objection, that it seemed to allow men to be unholy. What such a Gospel would seem to do would be to accentuate in all its parts the urgency of obedience in order to acceptance ; the vital importance on the one hand of an internal change in our nature (through sacramental operation, according to many) ; and then on the other hand the practice of Christian virtues, with the hope, in consequence, of acceptance, more or less complete, in heaven. Whether the objector, the enquirer, was dull, or whether he was subtle, it could not have occurred to him to say, "You are preaching a Gospel of licence ; I may, if you are right, live as I please, only drawing a little deeper on the fund of gratuitous acceptance as I go on." But just this was the *animus*, and such were very nearly the words, of those who either hated St Paul's message as unorthodox, or wanted an excuse for the sin they loved, and found it in quotations from St Paul. Then St Paul must have meant by faith what faith ought to mean, simple trust. And he must have meant by justification without works, what those words ought to mean, acceptance irrespective of our recommendatory conduct. Such a Gospel was no doubt liable to be mistaken and misrepresented, and in just the way we are now observing. But it was also, and it is so still, the only Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation—to the fully awakened conscience, to the soul that sees itself, and asks for God indeed.

This undesigned witness to the meaning of the Pauline doctrine of Justification by Faith only will appear

still more strongly when we come to the Apostle's answer to his questioners. He meets them not at all by modifications of his assertions. He has not a word to say about additional and corrective conditions precedent to our peace with God. He makes no impossible hint that Justification means the making of us good, or that Faith is a "short title" for Christian practice. No; there is no reason for such assertions either in the nature of words, or in the whole cast of the argument through which he has led us. What does he do? He takes this great truth of our acceptance in Christ our Merit, and puts it unreserved, unrelieved, unspoiled, in contact with other truth, of coordinate, nay, of superior greatness, for it is the truth to which Justification leads us, as way to end. He places our acceptance through Christ Atoning in organic connexion with our life in Christ Risen. He indicates, as a truth evident to the conscience, that as the thought of our share in the Lord's Merit is inseparable from union with the meriting Person, so the thought of this union is inseparable from that of a spiritual harmony, a common life, in which the accepted sinner finds both a direction and a power in his Head. Justification has indeed set him free from the condemning claim of sin, from guilt. He is as if *he* had died the Death of sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction; as if *he* had passed through the *Lama Sabachthani*, and had "poured out *his* soul" for sin. So he is "dead to sin," in the sense in which his Lord and Representative "died to" it; the atoning death has killed sin's claim on him for judgment. As having so died, in Christ, he is "justified from sin." But then, because he thus died "in Christ," he is "in Christ" still, in respect also of resurrection. He is justified, not that he may go away, but that in His Justifier he may

live, with the powers of that holy and eternal life with which the Justifier rose again.

The two truths are concentrated as it were into one, by their equal relation to the same Person, the Lord. The previous argument has made us intensely conscious that Justification, while a definite transaction in law, is not a mere transaction; it lives and glows with the truth of connexion with a Person. That Person is the Bearer for us of all Merit. But He is also, and equally, the Bearer for us of new Life; in which the sharers of His Merit share, for they are in Him. So that, while the Way of Justification can be isolated for study, as it has been in this Epistle, the justified man cannot be isolated from Christ, who is his life. And thus he can never *ultimately* be considered apart from his possession, in Christ, of a new possibility, a new power, a new and glorious call to living holiness.

In the simplest and most practical terms the Apostle sets it before us that our justification is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. We are accepted that we may be possessed, and possessed after the manner not of a mechanical "article," but of an organic limb.* We have "received the reconciliation" that we may now walk, not away from God, as if released from a prison, but with God, as His children in His Son. Because we are justified, we are to be holy, separated from sin, separated to God; not as a mere indication that our faith is real, and that therefore we are legally safe, but because we were justified for this very purpose, that we might be holy. To return to a simile we have

* Not that the imagery of the limb appears here, explicitly. But it does appear below, xii. 5, and in the contemporary passage 1 Cor. vi. 15; and more fully in the Epistles of the First Captivity.

employed already, the grapes upon a vine are not merely a living token that the tree is a vine, and is alive; they are the product for which the vine exists. It is a thing not to be thought of that the sinner should accept justification—and live to himself. It is a moral contradiction of the very deepest kind, and cannot be entertained without betraying an initial error in the man's whole spiritual creed.

And further, there is not only this profound connexion of purpose between acceptance and holiness. There is a connexion of endowment and capacity. Justification has done for the justified a twofold work, both limbs of which are all important for the man who asks, *How can* I walk and please God? First, it has decisively broken the claim of sin upon him as guilt. He stands clear of that exhausting and enfeebling load. The pilgrim's burthen has fallen from his back, at the foot of the Lord's Cross, into the Lord's Grave. He *has* peace with God, not in emotion, but in covenant, through our Lord Jesus Christ. He has an unreserved "introduction" into a Father's loving and welcoming presence, every day and hour, in the Merit of his Head. But then also Justification has been to him as it were the signal of his union with Christ in new life; this we have noted already. Not only therefore does it give him, as indeed it does, an eternal occasion for a gratitude which, as he feels it, "makes duty joy, and labour rest." It gives him *a new power* with which to live the grateful life; a power residing not in Justification itself, but in what it opens up. It is the gate through which he passes to the fountain; it is the wall which ramparts the fountain, the roof which shields him as he drinks. The fountain is his justifying Lord's exalted Life, His risen Life, poured into the man's being by

the Spirit who makes Head and member one. And it is as justified that he has access to the fountain, and drinks as deep as he will of its life, its power, its purity. In the contemporary passage, 1 Cor. vi. 17, St Paul had already written (in a connexion unspeakably practical), "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." It is a sentence which might stand as a heading to the passage we now come to render.

Ver. 1. **What shall we say then? Shall we cling to** (ἐπιμενοῦμεν, ἐπιμένωμεν) **the sin that the grace may multiply**, the grace of the acceptance of the guilty? Ver. 2. **Away with the thought! We, the very men who** * **died to that** (τῇ) **sin**,—when our Representative, in whom we have believed, died for us to it, died to meet and break its claim—**how shall we any longer live**, have congenial being and action, **in it**, as in an air we like to breathe? It is a moral impossibility that the man *so* freed from this thing's tyrannic claim to slay him should wish for anything else than severance from it in *all* respects. Or Ver. 3. **do you not know that we all, when baptized** † **into Jesus Christ**, when the sacred water sealed to us our faith-received contact with Him and interest in Him, **were baptized into His Death**, baptized as coming into union with Him as, above all, the Crucified, the Atoning? Do you forget that your covenant-Head, of whose covenant of peace your baptism was the divine physical token, is nothing to you if not your Saviour *who died*, and who died because of this very sin with

* Οἵτινες: the paraphrase is perhaps a slight exaggeration of the force of the pronoun.

† Ὅσοι ἐβαπτίσθημεν: we give a paraphrase, not a translation, to shew the meaning practically.

which your thought now parleys; died because only *so* could He break its legal bond upon you, in order to break its moral bond? **We were entombed therefore with Him by means of our** (*τοῦ*) **baptism,** as it symbolized and sealed the work of faith, **into His** (*τὸν*) **Death**; it certified our interest in that vicarious death, even to its climax in the grave which, as it were, swallowed up the Victim; **that just as Christ rose from the dead by means of the glory of the Father,** as that death issued for Him in a new and endless life, not by accident, but because the Character of God, the splendour (*δόξα*) of His love, truth, and power, secured the issue, **so we too should begin to walk** (*περιπατήσωμεν*) **in newness of life,** should step forth in a power altogether new, in our union still with Him. All possible emphasis lies upon those words, "*newness of life.*" They bring out what has been indicated already (v. 17, 18), the truth that the Lord has won us not only remission of a death-penalty, not only even an extension of existence under happier circumstances, and in a more grateful and hopeful spirit—but a new and wonderful life-power. The sinner has fled to the Crucified, that he may not die. He is now not only amnestied but accepted. He is not only accepted but incorporated into his Lord, as one with Him in interest. He is not only incorporated as to interest, but, because His Lord, being Crucified, is also Risen, he is incorporated into Him as Life. The Last Adam, like the First, transmits not only legal but vital effects to His member. In Christ the man has, in a sense as perfectly practical as it is inscrutable, new life, new power, as the Holy Ghost applies to his inmost being the presence and virtues of his Head. "In Him he lives, by Him he moves."

Ver. 4.

To men innumerable the discovery of this ancient

truth, or the fuller apprehension of it, has been indeed like a beginning of new life. They have been long and painfully aware, perhaps, that their strife with evil was a serious failure on the whole, and their deliverance from its power lamentably partial. And they could not always command as they would the emotional energies of gratitude, the warm consciousness of affection. Then it was seen, or seen more fully, that the Scriptures set forth this great mystery, this powerful fact; our union with our Head, by the Spirit, for life, for victory and deliverance, for dominion over sin, for willing service. And the hands are lifted up, and the knees confirmed, as the man uses the now open secret—Christ in him, and he in Christ—for the real walk of life. But let us listen to St Paul again.

Ver. 5. **For if we became vitally connected** (*σύμφυτοι*), He with us and we with Him, **by the likeness of His Death,** by the baptismal plunge, symbol and seal of our faith-union with the Buried Sacrifice, **why** (*ἀλλὰ*), **we shall be** vitally connected with Him by the likeness **also of His Resurrection,** by the baptismal emergence, symbol and seal of our faith-union with the Risen Lord, and so with His risen power.* **This knowing, that our**

Ver. 6. **old man,** our old state, as out of Christ and under Adam's headship, under guilt and in moral bondage, **was crucified with** Christ, was as it

* We thus paraphrase a difficult sentence. It seems to us that the *ὁμοίωμα τοῦ θανάτου Αὐτοῦ* must refer to the baptismal rite. If so, our paraphrase as a whole will be justified.—As to the "*plunge*" and "*emergence*," we would only say, without entering further on an agitated question, that it seems to us clear that baptism was at first, *theoretically*, an entire immersion, but that, also primevally, the theory was allowed to be modified in practice; *the pouring* of water in such cases *representing* the ideal immersion. As early as "*the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*," cent. i. (ch. vii.), there are signs of this.

were nailed to His atoning Cross, where He represented us. In other words, He on the Cross, our Head and Sacrifice, so dealt with our fallen state for us, **that the body of sin,** this our body viewed as sin's stronghold, medium, vehicle, **might be cancelled,** might be in abeyance, put down, deposed, so as to be no more the fatal door to admit temptation to a powerless soul within.

"*Cancelled*" is a strong word. Let us lay hold upon its strength, and remember that it gives us not a dream, but a fact, to be found true in Christ. Let us not turn its fact into fallacy, by forgetting that, whatever "*cancel*" means, it does not mean that grace lifts us out of the body; that we are no longer to "*keep under the body, and bring it into subjection,*" in the name of Jesus. Alas for us, if any promise, any truth, is allowed to "cancel" the call to watch and pray, and to think that in no sense is there still a foe within. But all the rather let us grasp, and use, the glorious positive in its place and time, which is everywhere and every day. Let us recollect, let us confess our faith, that thus it is with us, through Him who loved us. He died for us for this very end, that our "*body of sin*" might be wonderfully "*in abeyance,*" as to the power of temptation upon the soul. Yes, as St Paul proceeds, **that henceforth we should not do bondservice to sin;** that from now onwards, from our acceptance in Him, from our realization of our union with Him, we should say to temptation a "*no*" that carries with it the power of the inward presence of the Risen Lord. Yes, for He has won that power for us in our Justification through His Death. He died for us, and we in Him, as to sin's claim, as to our guilt; and He thus died, as we have seen, on purpose that we might be not only legally accepted, but vitally united to Him. Such is the con-

nexion of the following clause, strangely rendered in the English Version, and often therefore misapplied,

Ver. 7. but whose literal wording is, **For he who died,** he who has died, **has been justified from his** (*τῆς*) **sin**; stands justified from it, stands free from its guilt. The thought is of the atoning Death, in which the believer is interested as if it were his own. And the implied thought is that, as that death is "fact accomplished," as "our old man" *was* so effectually "crucified with Christ," therefore we may, we must, claim the spiritual freedom and power in the Risen One which the Slain One secured for us when He bore our guilt.

This possession is also a glorious prospect, for it is permanent with the eternity of His Life. It not only

Ver. 8. is, but shall be. **Now if we died with Christ, we believe,** we rest upon His word and work for it, **that we shall also live with Him,*** that we shall share not only now but for all the future the powers of His risen life. For He lives for ever—and we are in Him!

Ver. 9. **Knowing that Christ, risen from the dead, no longer dies,** no death is in His future now; **death over Him has no more dominion,** its *claim* on Him

Ver. 10. is for ever gone. **For as to His dying** (*ὃ ἀπέθανε*), **it was as to our** (*τῇ*) **sin He died**; it was to deal with our sin's claim; and He has dealt with it indeed, so that His death is "*once*," *ἐφάπαξ*,

* More literally, perhaps, "*shall also come to life with Him.*" If we read this aright, it points to the prospect *future at the moment of the atoning Death*, when, ideally, we died. It does not therefore mean, practically, *that we do not live with Him now*, as we certainly do (see just below, ver. 11). But it is as if to say, "we believe that our share in His risen Life *surely follows*, now and always, our share in His atoning Death."

once for ever; **but as to His living** (ὃ ζῇ), **it is as to God He lives**; it is in relation to His Father's acceptance, it is as welcomed to His Father's throne for us, as the Slain One Risen. **Even so must you too reckon yourselves,** with the sure "*calculation*" that His work for you, His life for you, is infinitely valid, **to be dead indeed to your** (τῇ) **sin,** dead in His atoning death, dead to the guilt exhausted by that death, **but living to your** (τῷ) **God, in Christ Jesus**;* welcomed by your eternal Father, in your union with His Son, and in that union filled with a new and blessed life from your Head, to be spent in the Father's smile, on the Father's service.

Ver. 11.

Let us too, like the Apostle and the Roman Christians, "*reckon*" this wonderful reckoning; counting upon these bright mysteries as upon imperishable facts. All is bound up not with the tides or waves of our emotions, but with the living rock of our union with our Lord. "*In Christ Jesus*":—that great phrase, here first explicitly used in the connexion, includes all else in its embrace. Union with the slain and risen Christ, in faith, by the Spirit—here is our inexhaustible secret, for peace with God, for life to God, now and in the eternal day.

**Therefore do not let sin reign † in your mortal body,** mortal, because not yet fully emancipated, though your Lord has "cancelled" for you its character as "the body of sin," the seat and vehicle of conquering temptation. Do not let sin reign there, **so that you should obey the lusts of it,**‡ of the body. Observe the

Ver. 12.

* The words τῷ Κυρίῳ ἡμῶν are to be omitted from the text.

† Μὴ βασιλευέτω: possibly the present imperative may imply, "do not *go on letting* it reign."

‡ Omit αὐτῃ ἐν from the text.

implied instruction. The body, "*cancelled*" as "the body of sin," still has its "*lusts*," its desires; or rather desires are still occasioned by it to the man, desires which potentially, if not actually, are desires away from God. And the man, justified through the Lord's death and united to the Lord's life, is not therefore to mistake a *laissez-faire* for faith. He is to *use* his divine possessions, with a real energy of will. It is *for him*, in a sense most practical, to see that his wealth is put to use, that his wonderful freedom is realized in act and habit. "*Cancelled*" does not mean annihilated. The body exists, and sin exists, and "*desires*" exist. It is for you, O man in Christ, to say to the enemy, defeated yet present, "Thou shalt not reign; I veto thee in the name of my King."

Ver. 13. **And do not present** * **your limbs,** your bodies in the detail of their faculties, **as implements** (*ὅπλα*) **of unrighteousness, to sin,** to sin regarded as the holder and employer of the implements. **But present** † **yourselves,** your whole being, centre and circle, **to God, as men living after death,** in His Son's risen life, **and your limbs,** hand, foot, and head, with all their faculties, **as implements of righteousness for God.**

"O blissful self-surrender!" The idea of it, sometimes cloudy, sometimes radiant, has floated before the human soul in every age of history. The spiritual fact that the creature, as such, can never find its true centre in itself, but only in the Creator, has expressed itself in many various forms of aspiration and endeavour,

* Παριστάνετε: we may perhaps explain this present imperative also to mean "do not *go on so doing*."

† Παραστήσατε: the aorist certainly implies a critical resolve, a *decision* of surrender.

now nearly touching the glorious truth of the matter, now wandering into cravings after a blank loss of personality, or however an eternal *coma* of absorption into an Infinite practically impersonal; or again, affecting a submission which terminates in itself, an *islàm*, a self-surrender into whose void no blessing falls from the God who receives it. Far different is the "self-presentation" of the Gospel. It is done in the fulness of personal consciousness and choice. It is done with revealed reasons of infinite truth and beauty to warrant its rightness. And it is a placing of the surrendered self into Hands which will both foster its true development as only its Maker can, as He fills it with His presence, and will use it, in the bliss of an eternal serviceableness, for His beloved will.

# CHAPTER XV

## *JUSTIFICATION AND HOLINESS: ILLUSTRATIONS FROM HUMAN LIFE*

ROMANS vi. 14—vii. 6

AT the point we have now reached, the Apostle's thought pauses for a moment, to resume.* He has brought us to self-surrender. We have seen the sacred obligations of our divine and wonderful liberty. We have had the miserable question, "*Shall we cling to sin?*" answered by an explanation of the rightness and the bliss of giving over our accepted persons, in the fullest liberty of will, to God, in Christ. Now he pauses, to illustrate and enforce. And two human relations present themselves for the purpose; the one to shew the absoluteness of the surrender, the other its living results. The first is Slavery, the second is Wedlock.

Ver. 14. **For sin shall not have dominion over you**; sin shall not put in its claim upon you, the claim which the Lord has met in your Justification; **for you are**

* It will be observed that we place *the paragraph* after ver. 13, not, as many editions of the Epistle do, after ver. 14. It seems to us clear that ver. 14 has a closer connexion with the following than with the previous context. It looks back, not precisely to ver. 13, but to the general recent argument, that it may then look definitely forward, over new ground.

**not brought* under law, but under grace.** The whole previous argument explains this sentence. He refers to our acceptance. He goes back to the justification of the guilty, "without the deeds of law," by the act of free grace; and briefly restates it thus, that he may take up afresh the position that this glorious liberation means not licence but divine order. Sin shall be no more your tyrant-creditor, holding up the broken law in evidence that it has right to lead you off to a pestilential prison, and to death. Your dying Saviour has met your creditor in full for you, and in Him you have entire discharge in that eternal court where the terrible plea once stood against you. Your dealings as debtors are now not with the enemy who cried for your death, but with the Friend who has bought you out of his power.

Ver. 15. **What then? are we to sin, because we are not brought under law, but under grace?** Shall our life be a life of licence, because we are thus wonderfully free? The question assuredly is one which, like that of ver. 1, and like those suggested in iii. 8, 31, had often been asked of St Paul, by the bitter opponent, or by the false follower. And again it illustrates and defines, by the direction of its error, the line of truth from which it flew off. It helps to do what we remarked above,† to assure us that when St Paul taught "Justification by faith, without deeds of law," he meant what he said, without reserve; he taught that great side of truth wholly, and without a compromise. He called the sinner, "just as he was, and waiting not to rid his soul of one dark blot," to receive at once, and without fee, the acceptance of God

* Ὑπὸ νόμον, ὑπὸ χάριν: the accusative case gives the preposition properly the meaning of *motion underwards*. But this must not be pressed too far.

† P. 157.

for Another's blessed sake. Bitter must have been the moral pain of seeing, from the first, this holy freedom distorted into an unhallowed leave to sin.* But he will not meet it by an impatient compromise, or untimely confusion. It shall be answered by a fresh collocation; the liberty shall be seen in its relation to the Liberator; and behold, the perfect freedom is a perfect service, willing but absolute, a slavery joyfully accepted, with open eyes and open heart, and then lived out as the most real of obligations by a being who has entirely seen that he is not his own.

Ver. 16. **Away with the thought. Do you not know that the party to whom you present,** surrender, **yourselves bondservants,** slaves, **so as to obey** him,—**bondservants you are,** not the less for the freewill of the surrender, **of the party whom you obey;** no longer merely contractors with him, who may bargain, or retire, but his bondservants out and out; **whether of sin, to death, or of obedience, to righteousness?** (As if their *assent* (ὑπακοὴν) to Christ, their *Amen* to His terms of peace, acceptance, righteousness, were personified; they were now the bondsmen of this their own act and deed, which had put them, as it were, into Christ's hands for all things.)

Ver. 17. **Now** (δὲ) **thanks be to our** (τῷ) **God, that you were bondmen of sin,** in legal claim, and under moral sway; yes, every one of you was this, whatever forms the bondage took upon its surface; **but you**

* Luther's *Esto peccator, et pecca fortiter*, has been often quoted as if that great saint meant to argue licence from Justification by faith. "God forbid." The words occur in a counsel to Melanchthon, whose anxious conscience doubted whether it were not a sin to communicate in one Kind, even where the true Rite in both Kinds could not be had. It was Luther's glowing paradox, to drive a manifestly morbid and weakening scrupulousness from his friend's mind. See Julius Hare's *Vindication of Luther*, pp. 178, etc.

**obeyed from the heart the mould of teaching to which you were handed over.*** They had been sin's slaves. Verbally, not really, he "*thanks God*" for that fact of the past. Really, not verbally, he "*thanks God*" for the pastness of the fact, and for the bright contrast to it in the regenerated present. They had now been "*handed over*," by their Lord's transaction about them, to another ownership, and they had accepted the transfer, "*from the heart.*" It was done by Another for them, but they had said their humble, thankful *fiat* as He did it. And what was the new ownership thus accepted? We shall find soon (ver. 22), as we might expect, that it is the mastery of God. But the bold, vivid introductory imagery has already called it (ver. 16) the slavery of "*Obedience.*" Just below (vers. 19, 20) it is the slavery of "*Righteousness,*" that is, if we read the word aright in its whole context, of "the Righteousness of God," His acceptance of the sinner as His own in Christ. And here, in a phrase most unlikely of all, whose personification strikes life into the most abstract aspects of the message of the grace of God, the believer is one who has been transferred to the possession of "*a mould of Teaching.*" The apostolic Doctrine, the mighty Message, the living Creed of life, the Teaching of the acceptance of the guilty for the sake of Him who was their Sacrifice, and is now their Peace and Life—this truth has, as it were, grasped them as its vassals, to form them, to mould them, for its issues. It is indeed their "*tenet.*" It *holds them*; a thought far different from what is too often meant when we say of a doctrine that "we *hold it.*" Justification by their Lord's merit, union with their

* So undoubtedly the Greek must be rendered.

Lord's life; this was a doctrine, reasoned, ordered, verified. But it was a doctrine warm and tenacious with the love of the Father and of the Son. And it had laid hold of them with a mastery which swayed thought, affection, and will; ruling their whole view of self and of God. **Now** (δὲ), **liberated from your** Ver. 18. (τῆς) **sin, you were enslaved to the Righteousness** of God.* Here is the point of the argument. It is a point of steel, for all is fact; but the steel is steeped in love, and carries life and joy into the heart it penetrates. They are not for one moment their own. Their acceptance has magnificently emancipated them from their tyrant-enemy. But it has absolutely bound them to their Friend and King. Their glad consent to be accepted has carried with it a consent to belong. And if that consent was at the moment rather implied than explicit, virtual rather than articulately conscious, they have now only to understand their blessed slavery better to give the more joyful thanksgivings to Him who has thus claimed them altogether as His own.

The Apostle's aim in this whole passage is to awaken them, with the strong, tender touch of his holy reasoning, to articulate their position to themselves. They have trusted Christ, and are in Him. Then, they have entrusted themselves altogether to Him. Then, they have, in effect, surrendered. They have consented to be His property. They are the bondservants, they are the slaves,† of His Truth, that is, of Him robed and

* See above, p. 173.

† We do not forget that many Christians feel a strong repugnance to the use of this word, steeped as it is in associations of degradation and wrong. For ourselves, we would yield to this feeling so far as habitually to prefer the word of milder sound, "*bondservant*." But surely in this passage the Apostle on purpose so accentuates the

revealed in His Truth, and shining through it on them in the glory at once of His grace and of His claim. Nothing less than such an obligation is the fact for them. Let them feel, let them weigh, and then let them embrace, the chain which after all will only prove their pledge of rest and freedom.

What St Paul thus did for our elder brethren at Rome, let him do for us of this later time. For us, who read this page, all the facts are true in Christ to-day. To-day let us define and affirm their issues to ourselves, and recollect our holy bondage, and realize it, and live it out with joy.

Now he follows up the thought. Conscious of the superficial repulsiveness of the metaphor—quite as repulsive in itself to the Pharisee as to the Englishman—he as it were apologizes for it; not the less carefully, in his noble considerateness, because so many of his first readers were actually slaves. He does not *lightly* go for his picture of our Master's hold of us to the market of Corinth, or of Rome, where men and women were sold and bought to belong as absolutely to their buyers as cattle, or as furniture. Yet he *does* go there, to shake slow perceptions into consciousness, and bring the will face to face with the claim of God. So he proceeds: **I speak humanly,** I use the terms of this utterly *not-divine* bond of man to man, to illustrate man's glorious bond to God, **because of the weakness of your flesh,** because your yet imperfect state enfeebles your spiritual perception, and demands a

Ver. 19.

thought of our bondservice that its fullest and sternest designation is in place. And, if in any degree we gather the thought of other hearts from our own, there are times and connexions in which the fulness of *the joy* of service demands that designation in order to its adequate realization.

harsh paradox to direct and fix it. **For**—here is what he means by "*humanly*"—**just as you surrendered your limbs,*** your functions and faculties in human life, **slaves to your** (*τῇ*) **impurity and to your** (*τῇ*) **lawlessness, unto that** (*τὴν*) **lawlessness**, so that the bad principle did indeed come out in bad practice, **so now**, with as little reserve of liberty, **surrender your limbs slaves to righteousness**, to God's Righteousness, to your justifying God, **unto sanctification**—so that the surrender shall come out in your Master's sovereign separation of His purchased property from sin.

He has appealed to the moral reason of the regenerate soul. Now he speaks straight to the will. You are, with infinite rightfulness, the bondmen of your God. You see your deed of purchase; it is the other side of your warrant of emancipation. Take it, and write your own unworthy names with joy upon it, consenting and assenting to your Owner's perfect rights. And then live out your life, keeping the autograph of your own surrender before your eyes. Live, suffer, conquer, labour, serve, as men who have themselves walked to their Master's door, and presented the ear to the awl which pins it to the doorway, each in his turn saying, "I will not go out free." †

To such an act of the soul the Apostle calls these saints, whether they had done the like before or no. They were to sum up the perpetual fact, then and there, into a definite and critical act (*παραστήσατε*, aorist) of thankful will. And he calls us to do the same to-day. By the grace of God, it shall be done. With eyes open,

* Μέλη: what "*the body*" is in such passages as xii. 1 that "*the limbs*" are in detail.

† Exod. xxi. 5, 6; Deut. xv. 16, 17.

and fixed upon the face of the Master who claims us, and with hands placed helpless and willing within His hands, we will, we do, present ourselves bondservants to Him; for discipline, for servitude, for all His will.

Ver. 20. **For when you were slaves of your** (*τῆς*) **sin, you were freemen as to righteousness,** God's Righteousness (*τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ*). It had nothing to do with you, whether to give you peace or to receive your tribute of love and loyalty in reply. Practically, Christ was not your Atonement, and so not your Master; you stood, in a dismal independence, outside His claims. To you, your lips were your own; your time was your own; your will was your own. You belonged to self; that is to say, you were the slaves of your sin. Will you go back? Will the word "freedom" (he plays with it, as it were, to prove them) make you wish yourselves back where you were before you had endorsed by faith your purchase by the blood of Christ? Nay, for what was that "freedom," seen in its results, its results upon yourselves? **What fruit, therefore,** (the "*there-*

Ver. 21. *fore*" of the logic of facts,) **used you to have then,** in those old days, **from things over which you are ashamed now?** Ashamed indeed; **for the end,** the issue, as the fruit is the tree's "end," **the end of those things is—death;** perdition of all true life, here and hereafter too. **But now,** in the blessed actual state of

Ver. 22. your case, as by faith you have entered into Christ, into His work and into His life, **now liberated from sin and enslaved to God, you have your fruit,** you possess indeed, at last, the true issues of being for which you were made, all contributing **to sanctification,** to that separation to God's will in practice which is the development of your separation to that will in critical fact, when you met your Redeemer in self-renouncing

faith. Yes, this fruit you have indeed; **and as its end,** as that for which it is produced, to which it always and for ever tends, you have **life eternal. For the**
Ver. 23. **pay of sin,** sin's military stipend (ὀψώνια), punctually given to the being which has joined its war against the will of God, **is death; but the free gift of God is life eternal, in Jesus Christ our Lord.**

"Is life worth living?" Yes, infinitely well worth, for the living man who has surrendered to "the Lord that bought him." Outside that ennobling captivity, that invigorating while most genuine bondservice, the life of man is at best complicated and tired with a bewildered quest, and gives results at best abortive, matched with the ideal purposes of such a being. We "present ourselves to God," for His ends, as implements, vassals, willing bondmen; and lo, our own end is attained. Our life has settled, after its long friction, into gear. Our root, after hopeless explorations in the dust, has struck at last the stratum where the immortal water makes all things live, and grow, and put forth fruit for heaven. The heart, once dissipated between itself and the world, is now "united" to the will, to the love, of God; and understands itself, and the world, as never before; and is able to deny self and to serve others in a new and surprising freedom. The man, made willing to be nothing but the tool and bondman of God, "*has his fruit*" at last; bears the true product of his now re-created being, pleasant to the Master's eye, and fostered by His air and sun. And this "*fruit*" issues, as acts issue in habit, in the glad experience of a life really sanctified, really separated in ever deeper inward reality, to a holy will. And the "*end*" of the whole glad possession, is "*life eternal.*"

Those great words here signify, surely, the coming bliss of the sons of the resurrection, when at last in their whole perfected being they will "live" all through, with a joy and energy as inexhaustible as its Fountain, and unencumbered at last and for ever by the conditions of our mortality. To that vast future, vast in its scope yet all concentrated round the fact that "we shall be like HIM, for we shall see HIM as HE is," the Apostle here looks onward. He will say more of it, and more largely, later, in the eighth chapter. But as with other themes so with this he preludes with a few glorious chords the great strain soon to come. He takes the Lord's slave by the hand, amidst his present tasks and burthens, (dear tasks and burthens, because the Master's, but still full of the conditions of earth,) and he points upward—not to a coming *manumission* in glory; the man would be dismayed to foresee that; he wants to "serve for ever";—but to a scene of service in which the last remainders of hindrance to its action will be gone, and a perfected being will for ever, perfectly, be not its own, and so will perfectly live in God. And this, so he says to his fellow-servant, to you and to me, is "*the gift of God*"; a grant as free, as generous, as ever King gave vassal here below. And it is to be enjoyed as such, by a being which, living wholly for Him, will freely and purely exult to live wholly on Him, in the heavenly places.

Yet surely the bearing of the sentences is not wholly upon heaven. Life eternal, so to be developed hereafter that Scripture speaks of it often as if it began hereafter, really begins here, and develops here, and is already "more abundant" (John x. 10) here. It is, as to its secret and also its experience, to know and to enjoy God, to be possessed by Him, and used for all His will. In

this respect it is "*the end*," the issue and the goal, now and perpetually, of the surrender of the soul. The Master meets that attitude with more and yet more of Himself, known, enjoyed, possessed, possessing. And so He gives, evermore gives, out of His sovereign bounty, life eternal to the bondservant who has embraced the fact that he is nothing, and has nothing, outside his Master. Not at the outset of the regenerate life only, and not only when it issues into the heavenly ocean, but all along the course, the life eternal is still "the free gift of God." Let us now, to-day, to-morrow, and always, open the lips of surrendering and obedient faith, and drink it in, abundantly, and yet more abundantly. And let us use it for the Giver.

We are already, here on earth, at its very springs; so the Apostle reminds us. For it is "*in Jesus Christ our Lord*"; and we, believing, are in Him, "saved in His life." It is in Him; nay, it is He. "I am the Life"; "He that hath the Son, hath the life." Abiding in Christ, we live "because He liveth." It is not to be "attained"; it is given, it is our own. In Christ, it is given, in its divine fulness, as to covenant provision, here, now, from the first, to every Christian. In Christ, it is supplied, as to its fulness and fitness for each arising need, as the Christian asks, receives, and uses for his Lord.

So from, or rather in, our holy bondservice the Apostle has brought us to our inexhaustible life, and its resources for willing holiness. But he has more to say in explaining the beloved theme. He turns from slave to wife, from surrender to bridal, from the purchase to the vow, from the results of a holy bondage to the offspring of a heavenly union. Hear him as he proceeds:

**Or do you not know, brethren,** (for **I** am talking (λαλῶ) **to those acquainted with law,** whether Mosaic or Gentile,) **that the law has claim on the man,** the party (ἄνθρωπος) in any given case, **for his whole lifetime? For the woman with a husband** (ἀνὴρ) **is to her living husband bound by law,** stands all along bound (δέδεται) to him. *His life,* under normal conditions, is his adequate claim. Prove him living, and you prove her his. **But if the husband should have died, she stands ipso facto cancelled** * (κατήργηται) **from the husband's law,** the marriage law as he could bring it to bear against her.

Ch. vii. Ver. 1. Ver. 2.

**So, therefore, while the husband lives, she will earn adulteress for her name, if she weds another** (ἑτέρῳ, "*a second*") **husband. But if the husband should have died, she is free from the law** in question, **so as to be no adulteress, if wedded to another,** a second, **husband.**

Ver. 3.

**Accordingly, my brethren, you too,** as a mystic bride, collectively and individually,† **were done to death as to the Law,** so slain that its capital claim upon you is met *and done,* **by means of the Body of the Christ** (τοῦ Χριστοῦ), by "the doing to death" of His sacred Body for you, on His atoning Cross, to satisfy for you the aggrieved Law; **in order to your wedding Another,** a second Party (ἑτέρῳ), **Him who rose from the dead; that we might bear fruit for God;** "*we,*" Paul and his converts, in one happy *fellowship,* which he delights thus to remember and indicate by the way.

Ver. 4.

The parable is stated and explained with a clearness which leaves us at first the more surprised that in the application the illustration should be reversed. In

* We render the bold phrase literally.

† See 1 Cor. vi. 17.

the illustration, the husband dies, the woman lives, and weds again. In the application, the Law does not die, but we, its unfaithful bride, are "*done to death to it*," and then, strange sequel, are wedded to the Risen Christ. We are taken by Him to be "one spirit" with Him (1 Cor. vi. 17). We are made one in all His interests and wealth, and fruitful of a progeny of holy deeds in this vital union. Shall we call all this a simile confused? Not if we recognize the deliberate and explicit carefulness of the whole passage. St Paul, we may be sure, was quite as quick as we are to see the inverted imagery. But he is dealing with a subject which would be distorted by a mechanical correspondence in the treatment. The Law cannot die, for it is the preceptive will of God. Its claim is, in its own awful *forum domesticum*, like the injured Roman husband, to sentence its own unfaithful wife to death. And so it does; so it has done. But behold, its Maker and Master steps upon the scene. He surrounds the guilty one with Himself, takes her whole burthen on Himself, and meets and exhausts her doom. He dies. He lives again, after death, because of death; and the Law acclaims His resurrection as infinitely just. He rises, clasping in His arms her for whom He died, and who thus died in Him, and now rises in Him. Out of His sovereign love, while the Law attests the sure contract, and rejoices as "the Bridegroom's Friend," He claims her—herself, yet in Him another—for His blessed Bride.

All is love, as if we walked through the lily-gardens of the holy Song, and heard the call of the turtle in the vernal woods, and saw the King and His Beloved rest and rejoice in one another. All is law, as if we were admitted to watch some process of Roman

matrimonial contract, stern and grave, in which every right is scrupulously considered, and every claim elaborately secured, without a smile, without an embrace, before the magisterial chair. The Church, the soul, is married to her Lord, who has died for her, and in whom now she lives. The transaction is infinitely happy. And it is absolutely right. All the old terrifying claims are amply and for ever met. And now the mighty, tender claims which take their place instantly and of course begin to bind the Bride. The Law has "given her away"—not to herself, but to the Risen Lord.

For this, let us remember, is the point and bearing of the passage. It puts before us, with its imagery at once so grave and so benignant, not only the mystic Bridal, but the Bridal as it is concerned with holiness. The Apostle's object is altogether this. From one side and from another he reminds us that *we belong*. He has shewn us our redeemed selves in their blessed bondservice; "free from sin, enslaved to God." He now shews us to ourselves in our divine wedlock; "*married to Another*," "*bound to the law of*" the heavenly Husband; clasped to His heart, but also to His rights, without which the very joy of marriage would be only sin. From either parable the inference is direct, powerful, and, when we have once seen the face of the MASTER and of the HUSBAND, unutterably magnetic on the will. You are set free, into a liberty as supreme and as happy as possible. You are appropriated, into a possession, and into a union, more close and absolute than language can set forth. You are wedded to One who "*has and holds* from this time forward." And the sacred bond is to be prolific of results. A life of willing and loving obedience, in the

power of the risen Bridegroom's life, is to have as it were for its progeny the fair circle of active graces, "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control."

Alas, in the time of the old abolished wedlock there was result, there was progeny. But that was the fruit not of the union but of its violation. Ver. 5. **For when we were in the flesh**, in our unregenerate days, when our rebel self,* the antithesis of "the Spirit," ruled and denoted us, (a state, he implies, in which we all were once, whatever our outward differences were,) **the passions**, the strong but reasonless impulses, **of our sins, which** passions **were by means of the Law**, occasioned by the fact of its just but unloved claim, fretting the self-life into action, **worked actively in our limbs**, in our bodily life in its varied faculties and senses, **so as to bear fruit for death.** We wandered, restive, from our bridegroom, the Law, to Sin, our paramour. And behold, a manifold result of evil deeds and habits, born as it were into bondage in the house of Death. **But now**, now as the wonderful case stands in the Ver. 6. grace of God, **we are** (it is the aorist, but our English fairly represents it) **abrogated from the Law**, divorced from our first injured Partner, nay, slain (in our crucified Head) in satisfaction of its righteous claim, **as having died** (*ἀποθανόντες*†) **with regard to that in which**

* No word, *for practical purposes*, answers better than "*self*" (as popularly used in Christian parlance) to the idea represented by St Paul's use of the word *σὰρξ* in moral connexions.

† So read, not *ἀποθανόντος*. The textual evidence supports *ἀποθανόντες*, and the evidence of the context is all for it. He has elaborately *avoided*, in applying his illustration, the thought that *the Law can die*. *We die*, in Christ, in judicial satisfaction of its most righteous claim. It lives with us, it guides us, with the authority of God. But it is now our monitor, not our avenger of blood.

**we were held captive,** even the Law and its violated bond, **so that we do bondservice in** the **Spirit's newness, and not in** the **Letter's oldness.**

Thus he comes back, through the imagery of wedlock, to that other parable of slavery which has become so precious to his heart. "*So that we do bondservice,*" "*so that we live a slave-life*"; ὥστε δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς. It is as if he must break in on the heavenly Marriage itself with that brand and bond, not to disturb the joy of the Bridegroom and the Bride, but to clasp to the Bride's heart the vital fact that she is not her own; that fact so blissful, but so powerful also and so practical that it is *worth anything* to bring it home.

It is to be no dragging and dishonouring bondage, in which the poor toiler looks wistfully out for the sinking sun and the extended shadows. It is to be "*not in the Letter's oldness*"; no longer on the old principle of the dread and unrelieved "*Thou shalt,*" cut with a pen of legal iron upon the stones of Sinai; bearing no provision of enabling power, but all possible provision of doom for the disloyal. It is to be "*in the Spirit's newness*"; on the new, wonderful principle, new in its full manifestation and application in Christ, of the Holy Ghost's empowering presence.* In that light and strength the new relations are discovered, accepted, and fulfilled. Joined by the Spirit to the Lord Christ, so as to have full benefit of His justifying merit; filled by the Spirit with the Lord Christ, so as to derive freely and always the blessed virtues of His life; the willing bondservant finds in his

* Such passages as this and its companion, 2 Cor. iii. 4-8, have no reference, however remote, to the "letter and spirit" of Holy Scripture. They contrast Sinai and Pentecost.

absolute obligations an inward liberty ever "*new*," fresh as the dawn, pregnant as the spring. And the worshipping Bride finds in the holy call to "keep her only unto HIM" who has died for her life, nothing but a perpetual surprise of love and gladness, "new every morning," as the Spirit shews her the heart and the riches of her Lord.

Thus closes, in effect, the Apostle's reasoned exposition of the self-surrender of the justified. Happy the man who can respond to it all with the *Amen* of a life which, reposing on the Righteousness of God, answers ever to His Will with the loyal gladness found in "the newness of the Spirit." It is "perfect freedom" to understand, in experience, the bondage and the bridal of the saints.

## CHAPTER XVI

### *THE FUNCTION OF THE LAW IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE*

ROMANS vii. 7-25

THE Apostle has led us a long way in his great argument; through sin, propitiation, faith, union, surrender, to that wonderful and "excellent mystery," the bridal oneness of Christ and the Church, of Christ and the believer. He has yet to unfold the secrets and glories of the experience of a life lived in the power of that Spirit of whose "*newness*" he has just spoken. But his last parable has brought him straight to a question which has repeatedly been indicated and deferred. He has told us that the Law of God was at first, ideally, our mystic husband, and that we were unfaithful in our wedded life, and that the injured lord sentenced to death his guilty spouse, and that the sentence was carried out—but carried out in Christ. Thus a death-divorce took place between us, the justified, and the Law, regarded as the violated party in the covenant—"Do this and live."

Is this ancient husband then a party whom we are now to suspect, and to defy? Our wedlock with him brought us little joy. Alas, its main experience was that we sinned. At best, if we did right, (in any deep

sense of right,) we did it against the grain; while we did wrong, (in the deep sense of wrong, difference from the will of God,) with a feeling of nature and gravitation. Was not our old lord to blame? Was there not something wrong about the Law? Did not the Law misrepresent God's will? Was it not, after all, *Sin itself in disguise*, though it charged us with the horrible guilt of a course of adultery with Sin?

We cannot doubt that the statement and the treatment of this question here are in effect a record of personal experience. The paragraph which it originates, this long last passage of chapter vii., bears every trace of such experience. Hitherto, in the main, he has dealt with "*you*" and "*us*"; now he speaks only as "*I*," only of "*me*," and of "*mine*." And the whole dialect of the passage, so to say, falls in with this use of pronouns. We overhear the colloquies, the altercations, of will with conscience, of will with will, almost of self with self, carried on in a region which only self-consciousness can penetrate, and which only the subject of it all can thus describe. Yes, the person Paul is here, analysing and reporting upon himself; drawing the veil from his own inmost life, with a hand firm because surrendered to the will of God, who bids him, for the Church's sake, expose himself to view. Nothing in literature, no *Confessions* of an Augustine, no *Grace Abounding* of a Bunyan, is more intensely individual. Yet on the other hand nothing is more universal in its searching application. For the man who thus writes is "the chosen vessel" of the Lord who has perfectly adjusted not his words only but his being, his experience, his conflicts and deliverances, to be manifestations of universal spiritual facts.

We need hardly say that this profound paragraph

has been discussed and interpreted most variously. It has been held by some to be only St Paul's intense way of presenting that great phenomenon, wide as fallen humanity—human will colliding with human conscience, so that "no man does all he knows." Passages from every quarter of literature, of all ages, of all races, have been heaped around it, to prove, (what is indeed so profoundly significant a fact, largely confirmatory of the Christian doctrine of Original Sin,*) that universal man is haunted by undone duties; and this passage is placed as it were in the midst, as the fullest possible confession of that fact, in the name of humanity, by an ideal individual. But surely it needs only an attentive reading of the passage, as a part of the Epistle to the Romans, as a part of the teaching of St Paul, to feel the extreme inadequacy of such an account. On the one hand the long groaning confession is no artificial embodiment of a universal fact; it is the cry of a human soul, if ever there was a personal cry. On the other hand the passage betrays a kind of conflict far deeper and more mysterious than merely that of "*I ought*" with "*I will not.*" It is a conflict of "*I will*" with "*I will not*"; of "*I hate*" with "*I do.*" And in the later stages of the confession we find the subject of the conflict avowing a wonderful sympathy with the Law of God; recording not merely an avowal that right is right, but a consciousness that God's precept is delectable. All this leads us to a spiritual region unknown to Euripides, and Horace, and even Epictetus.

Again it has been held that the passage records the experiences of a half-regenerate soul; struggling on

* See J. B. Mozley's *Lectures, etc.*, ix, x.

its way from darkness to light, stumbling across a border-zone between the power of Satan and the kingdom of God; deeply convinced of sin, but battling with it in the old impossible way after all, meeting self with self, or, otherwise, the devil with the man. But here again the passage seems to refuse the exposition, as we read *all* its elements. It is no experience of a half-renewed life to "take delight with the law of God after the inner man." It is utterly unlawful for a half-regenerate soul to describe itself as so beset by sin that "it is *not I*, but sin that dwelleth in me." No more dangerous form of thought about itself could be adopted by a soul not fully acquainted with God.

Again, and quite on the other hand, it has been held that our passage lays it down that a stern but on the whole disappointing conflict with internal evil is the lot of the true Christian, in his fullest life, now, always, and to the end; that the regenerate and believing man is, if indeed awake to spiritual realities, to *feel* at every step, "O wretched man that I am"; "What I hate, that I do"; and to expect deliverance from such a consciousness only when he attains his final heavenly rest with Christ. Here again extreme difficulties attend the exposition; not from within the passage, but from around it. It is literally encircled with truths of liberty, in a servitude which is perfect freedom; with truths of power and joy, in a life which is by the Holy Ghost. It is quite incongruous with such surroundings that it should be thought to describe a spiritual experience dominant and characteristic in the Christian life.

"What shall we say then?" Is there yet another line of exegesis which will better satisfy the facts of both the passage and its context? We think there is one, which at once is distinctive in itself, and combines

elements of truth indicated by the others which we have outlined. For those others *have* each an element of truth, if we read aright. The passage *has* a reference to the universal conflict of conscience and will. It does say some things quite appropriate to the man who is awake to his bondage but has not yet found his Redeemer. And there is, we dare to say, a sense in which it may be held that the picture is true for the whole course of Christian life here on earth ; for there is never an hour of that life when the man who "says he has no sin" does not "deceive himself" (1 Joh. i. 8). And if that sin be but simple defect, a falling "short of the glory of God" ; nay, if it be only that mysterious tendency which, felt or not, hourly needs a divine counteraction ; still, the man "has sin," and must long for a final emancipation, with a longing which carries in it at least *a latent* "groan."

So we begin by recognizing that Paul, the personal Paul, speaking here to all of us, as in some solemn "testimony" hour, takes us first to his earliest deep convictions of right and wrong, when, apparently after a previous complacency with himself, he woke to see—but not to welcome—the absoluteness of God's will. He glided along a smooth stream of moral and mental culture and reputation till he struck the rock of "Thou shalt not covet," "Thou shalt not desire," "Thou must not have self-will." Then, as from a grave, which was however only an ambush, "*sin*" sprang up ; a conscious force of opposition to the claim of God's will as against the will of Paul ; and his dream of religious satisfaction died. Till we close ver. 11, certainly, we are in the midst of the unregenerate state. The tenses are past ; the narrative is explicit. He made a discovery of law which was as death after life to his then religious experience. He has nothing to say of counter-facts

in his soul. It was conviction, with only rebellion as its issue.

Then we find ourselves, we hardly know how, in a range of confessions of a different order. There is a continuity. The Law is there, and sin is there, and a profound moral conflict. But there are now counter-facts. The man, the *Ego*, now "*wills not*," nay, "*hates*," what he practises. He wills what God prescribes, though he does it not. His sinful deeds are, in a certain sense, in this respect, not his own. He actually "*delights, rejoices, with the Law of God.*" Yet there is a sense in which he is "*sold*," "*enslaved*," "*captured*," in the wrong direction.

Here, as we have admitted, there is much which is appropriate to the not yet regenerate state, where however the man is awakening morally, to good purpose, under the hand of God. But the passage as a whole refuses to be satisfied thus, as we have seen. He who can truly speak thus of an inmost sympathy, a sympathy of delight, with the most holy Law of God, is no half-Christian; certainly not in St Paul's view of things.

But now observe one great negative phenomenon of the passage. We read words about this regenerate sinner's moral being and faculties; about his "*inner man*," his "*mind*," "*the law of his mind*"; about "*himself*," as distinguished from the "*sin*" which haunts him. But we read not one clear word about that eternal Spirit, whose glorious presence we have seen (vii. 6), characterizing the Gospel, and of whom we are soon to hear in such magnificent amplitude. Once only is He even distantly indicated; "the *Law* is *spiritual*" (ver. 14). But that is no comfort, no deliverance. The Spirit is indeed in the Law; but He must be also

in the man, if there is to be effectual response, and harmony, and joy. No, we look in vain through the passage for one hint that the man, that Paul, is contemplated in it as filled by faith with the Holy Ghost for his war with indwelling sin working through his embodied conditions.

But he was regenerate, you say. And if so, he was an instance of the Spirit's work, a receiver of the Spirit's presence. It is so; not without the Spirit, working in him, could he "delight in the law of God," and "with his true self serve the law of God." But does this necessarily mean that he, as a conscious agent, was fully using his eternal Guest as his power and victory?

We are not merely discussing a literary passage. We are pondering an oracle of God about man. So we turn full upon the reader—and upon ourselves—and ask the question, whether the heart cannot help to expound this hard paragraph. Christian man, by grace, —that is to say, by the Holy Spirit of God,—you have believed, and live. You are a limb of Christ, who is your life. But you are a sinner still; always, actually, in defect, and in tendency; always, potentially, in ways terribly positive. For whatever the presence of the Spirit in you has done, it has not so altered you that, if He should go, you would not *instantly* "revert to the type" of unholiness. Now, how do you meet temptation from without? How do you deal with the dread fact of guilty imbecility within? Do you, if I may put it so, use regenerate faculty in unregenerate fashion, meeting the enemy *practically* alone, with only high resolves, and moral scorn of wrong, and assiduous processes of discipline on body or mind? God forbid we should call these things evil. They are good. But they

are the accidents, not the essence, of the secret; the wall, not the well, of power and triumph. It is the Lord Himself dwelling in you who is your victory; and that victory is to be realized by a conscious and decisive appeal to Him. "Through Him you shall do valiantly; for He it is that shall tread down your enemies" (Psal. lx. 12). And is not this verified in your experience? When, in your regenerate state, you use the true regenerate way, is there not a better record to be given? When, realizing that the true principle is indeed a Person, you less resolve, less struggle, and more appeal and confide—is not sin's "reign" broken, and is not your foot, even yours, because you are in conscious union with the Conqueror, placed effectually on "all the power of the enemy"?

We are aware of the objection ready to be made, and by devout and reverent men. It will be said that the Indwelling Spirit works always through the being in whom He dwells; and that so we are not to think of Him as a separable Ally, but just to *act ourselves*, leaving it to Him to act through us. Well, we are willing to state the matter almost exactly in those last words, as theory. But the subject is too deep—and too practical—for neat logical consistency. He does indeed work in us, and through us. But then—it is HE. And to the hard pressed soul there is an unspeakable reality and power in thinking of Him as a separable, let us say simply a personal, Ally, who is also Commander, Lord, Life-Giver; and in calling Him definitely in.

So we read this passage again, and note this absolute and eloquent silence in it about the Holy Ghost. And we dare, in that view, to interpret it as St Paul's confession, not of a long past experience, not of an

imagined experience, but of his own normal experience always—when he acts out of character as a regenerate man. He fails, he "reverts," when, being a sinner by nature still, and in the body still, he meets the Law, and meets temptation, in any strength short of the definitely sought power of the Holy Ghost, making Christ all to him for peace and victory. And he implies, surely, that this failure is not a bare hypothesis, but that he knows what it is. It is not that God is not sufficient. He is so, always, now, for ever. But the man does not always adequately use God; as he ought to do, as he might do, as he will ever rise up afresh to do. And when he does not, the resultant failure—though it be but a thought of vanity, a flush of unexpressed anger, a microscopic flaw in the practice of truthfulness, an unhallowed imagination darting in a moment through the soul—is to him sorrow, burthen, shame. It tells him that "the flesh" is present still, present at least in its elements, though God can keep them out of combination. It tells him that, though immensely blest, and knowing now exactly where to seek, and to find, a constant practical deliverance (oh joy unspeakable!), he is still "in the body," and that its conditions are still of "death." And so he looks with great desire for its redemption. The present of grace is good, beyond all his hopes of old. But the future of glory is "far better."

Thus the man at once "serves the Law of God," as its willing bondman (*δουλεύω*, ver. 25), in the life of grace, and submits himself, with reverence and shame, to its convictions, when, if but for an hour, or a moment, he "reverts" to the life of the flesh.

Let us take the passage up now for a nearly continuous translation.

**What shall we say then,** in face of the thought of our death-divorce, in Christ, from the Law's con-
Ver. 7. demning power. **Is the Law sin?** Are they only two phases of one evil? **Away with the thought!** **But**—here is the connexion of the two—**I should not have known,** recognized, understood, **sin but by means of law. For coveting,** for example, **I should not have known,** should not have recognized as sin, **if the Law had not been saying, "Thou shalt not covet."** * **But sin,**
Ver. 8. **making a fulcrum of the commandment,**† **produced,** effected, **in me all coveting,** every various
Ver. 9. application of the principle. **For, law apart, sin is dead**—in the sense of lack of conscious action. It needs *a holy Will*, more or less revealed, to occasion its collision. Given no holy will, known or surmised, and it is "dead" *as rebellion*, though not *as pollution*. **But I,** the person in whom it lay buried, **was all alive** (ἔζων), conscious and content, **law apart, once on a time** (strange ancient memory in that biography!). **But when the commandment came** to my conscience and my will, **sin rose to life again,** ("*again*"; so it was no new creation after all) **and I—died**; I found myself legally doomed to death, morally without life-power, and bereft of the self-satisfaction that seemed my vital breath.
Ver. 10. **And the commandment that was life-wards,** prescribing nothing but perfect right, the straight line to life eternal, **proved** (εὑρέθη) **for me deathwards.**
Ver. 11. **For sin, making a fulcrum of the commandment, deceived me,** into thinking fatally wrong of God

* Exod. xx. 17.—Observe here that great fact of Christian doctrine; that desire, bias, gravitation away from God's will, is sin, whether carried into act *or not*. Is not St Paul here recalling some quite special spiritual incident?

† Ἀφορμὴν λαβοῦσα διὰ τῆς ἐντολῆς.

and of myself, **and through it killed me,** discovered me to myself as legally and morally a dead man. **So that**

Ver. 12. **the Law, indeed** (*μὲν*), **is holy, and the commandment,** the special precept which was my actual death-blow, **holy, and just, and good.** (He says, "the Law, *indeed*" (*μὲν*), with the implied antithesis that "sin, *on the other hand*," is the opposite; the whole fault of his misery beneath the Law lies with sin.)

Ver. 13. **The good thing then,** this good Law, **has it to me** * **become death? Away with the thought! Nay, but sin** did so become **that it might come out as sin, working out death for me by means of the good** Law—**that sin might prove overwhelmingly sinful, through the commandment,** which at once called it up, and, by awful contrast, exposed its nature. Observe, he does not say merely that sin thus "*appeared*" unutterably evil. More boldly, in this sentence of mighty paradoxes, he says that it "*became*" such. As it were, it developed its *character* into its fullest *action*, when it thus used the eternal Will to set creature against Creator. Yet even this was overruled; all happened thus "in order," so that the very virulence of the plague might effectually demand the glorious Remedy.

Ver. 14. **For we know,** we men with our conscience, we Christians with our Lord's light, **that the Law,** this Law which sin so foully abused, **is spiritual,** the expression of the eternal Holiness, framed by the sure guidance of the Holy Spirit; **but** then **I,** I Paul, taken as a sinner, viewed apart from Christ, **am fleshly,** a child of self, **sold to be under sin**; yes, not only when, in Adam, my nature sold itself at first, but still and always, just so far as I am considered apart from Christ,

* Ἐμοὶ is slightly emphatic; as if to say, "*a least in my case.*"

and just so far as, in practice, I live apart from Christ, "reverting," if but for a minute, to my self-life. For
Ver. 15. **the work I work out, I do not know,** I do not recognize; I am lost amidst its distorted conditions; for it is **not what I will that I practise** (πράσσω), but it is **what I hate that I do** (ποιῶ). **But if**
Ver. 16. **what I do is what I do not will, I assent to the Law that it,** the Law, **is good**; I shew my moral sympathy with the precept by the endorsement given it by my will, in the sense of my earnest moral preference.* **But now,**
Ver. 17. in this state of facts, **it is no longer I who work out the work, but the indweller in me—Sin.**

He implies by "*no longer*" that once it was otherwise; once *the central* choice was for self, now, in the regenerate life, even in its conflicts, yea, even in its failures, it is for God. A mysterious "other self" is latent still, and asserts itself in awful reality when the true man, the man as regenerate, ceases to watch and to pray. And in this sense he dares to say "*it is no more I.*" It is a sense the very opposite to the dream of self-excuse; for though the *Ego* as regenerate does not do the deed, it has, by its sleep, or by its confidence, betrayed the soul to the true doer. And thus he passes naturally into the following confessions, in which we read at once the consciousness of a state which ought not to be, though it is, and also the conviction that it is a state *out of character* with himself, with his personality as redeemed and new-created. Into such a confession there creeps no lying thought that he "is delivered to do these abominations" (Jer. vii. 10); that it is fate; that he cannot help it. Nor is the

* For this meaning of θέλειν see the closely parallel passage, the almost sketch or embryo of this paragraph, Gal. v. 17.

miserable dream present here that evil is but a phase of good, and that these conflicts are only discordant melodies struggling to a cadence where they will accord. It is a groan of shame and pain, from a man who could not be thus tortured if he were not born again. Yet it is also an avowal,—as if to assure himself that deliverance is intended, and is at hand,—that the treacherous tyrant he has let into the place of power *is an alien* to him as he is a man regenerate. Not for excuse, but to clear his thought, and direct his hope, he says this to himself, and to us, in his dark hour.

Ver. 18. **For I know that there dwells not in me, that is, in my flesh, good**; in my personal life, so long, and so far, as it "reverts" to self as its working centre, all is evil, for nothing is as God would have it be. And that "*flesh*," that self-life, is ever there, latent if not patent; present in such a sense that it is ready for instant reappearance, from within, if any moral power less than that of the Lord Himself is in command. **For the willing lies at my hand; but the working out what is right, does not.*** "*The willing*" (*τὸ θέλειν*), as throughout this passage, means not the ultimate *fiat* of the man's soul, deciding his action, but his earnest moral approbation, moral sympathy, *the convictions* of the enlightened being.

Ver. 19. **For not what I will, even good, do I; but what I do not will, even evil, that I practise.†**

Ver. 20. **Now if what I do is what I do not will, no longer,** as once, **do I work it out, but the indweller in me, Sin.**

Again his purpose is not excuse, but deliverance.

* Read not *οὐχ εὑρίσκω*, but simply *οὔ*.

† Again *ποιῶ* and *πράσσω*, as in ver. 16.

No deadly antinomianism is here, such as has withered innumerable lives, where the thought has been admitted that sin may be in the man, and yet the man may not sin. His thought is, as all along, that it is his own shame that thus it is; yet that the evil is, ultimately, a thing alien to his true character, and that therefore he is right to call the lawful King and Victor in upon it.

And now comes up again the solemn problem of the Law. That stern, sacred, monitor is looking on all the while, and saying all the while the things which first woke sin from its living grave in the old complacent experience, and then, in the regenerate state, provoked sin to its utmost treachery, and most fierce invasions. And the man hears the voice, and in his new-created character he loves it. But he has "reverted," ever so little, to his old attitude, to the self-life, and so there is *also* rebellion in him when that voice says "Thou shalt."

Ver. 21. **So I find the Law**—he would have said, "I find it my monitor, honoured, aye and loved, but not my helper"; but he breaks the sentence up in the stress of this intense confession; **so I find the Law**—**for me**, me **with a will to do the right**,—**that for me the evil lies at hand. For I have glad sympathy** Ver. 22. **with** (*συνήδομαι*) **the Law of God**; what He prescribes I endorse with delight as good, **as regards the inner man**, that is, my world of conscious insight and affection * in the new life; **but I see** (as if I Ver. 23. were a watcher from without) **a rival** (*ἕτερον*) **law**, another and contradictory precept, "serve *thyself*," **in my limbs**, in my world of sense and active faculty, **at war with the law of my mind**, the Law of God, adopted

* In itself, the phrase *ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος* is neutral. By usage it attaches itself to ideas of regeneration. See 2 Cor. iv. 16, Eph. iii. 16.

by my now enlightened thinking-power as its sacred code, **and seeking to make me captive in that war* to the law of sin**, the law **which is in my limbs.**

Ver. 24. **Unhappy man am I. Who will rescue me out of the body of this death,**† out of a life conditioned by this mortal body, which in the Fall became sin's especial vehicle, directly or indirectly, and which is not yet (vii. 23) actually "redeemed"? **Thanks be**

Ver. 25. **to God,**‡ who giveth that deliverance, in covenant and in measure now, fully and in eternal actuality hereafter, **through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**So then**, to sum the whole phenomenon of the conflict up, leaving aside for the moment this glorious hope of the issue, **I, myself, with the mind indeed do bondservice to the law of God, but with the flesh**, with the life of self, wherever and whenever I "revert" that way, I do bondservice **to the law of sin.**

Do we close the passage with a sigh, and almost with a groan? Do we sigh over the intricacy of the thought, the depth and subtlety of the reasoning, the almost fatigue of fixing and of grasping the facts below the terms "*will*," and "*mind*," and "*inner man*," and "*flesh*," and "*I*"? Do we groan over the consciousness that no analysis of our spiritual failures can console us for the fact of them, and that the Apostle seems in his last sentences to relegate our consolations to the

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* Αἰχμαλωτίζοντα: "Making me prisoner of *war*." Observe the present tense, which indicates not necessarily the full success of the strategy, but its aim.

† The Greek equally allows the rendering "*out of this body of death*."

‡ Read χάρις τῷ Θεῷ.

future, while it is in the present that we fail, and in the present that we long with all our souls to do, as well as to approve, the will of God?

Let us be patient, and also let us think again. Let us find a solemn and sanctifying peace in the patience which meekly accepts the mystery that we must needs "wait yet for the redemption of our body"; that the conditions of "this corruptible" must yet for a season give ambushes and vantages to temptation, which will be all annihilated hereafter. But let us also think again. If we went at all aright in our remarks previous to this passage, there are glorious possibilities for the present hour "readable between the lines" of St Paul's unutterably deep confession. We have seen in conflict the Christian man, regenerate, yet taken, in a practical sense, apart from his Regenerator. We have seen him really fight, though he really fails. We have seen him unwittingly, but guiltily, betray his position to the foe, by occupying it as it were alone. We have seen also, nevertheless, that he is not his foe's ally but his antagonist. Listen; he is calling for his KING.

That cry will not be in vain. The King will take a double line of action in response. While his soldier-bondservant is yet in the body, "the body of this death," He will throw HIMSELF into the narrow hold, and wonderfully turn the tide within it, and around it. And hereafter, He will demolish it. Rather, He will transfigure it, into the counterpart—even as it were into the part—of His own Body of glory; and the man shall rest, and serve, and reign for ever, with a being homogeneous all through in its likeness to the Lord.

## CHAPTER XVII

### *THE JUSTIFIED: THEIR LIFE BY THE HOLY SPIRIT*

ROMANS viii. 1-11

THE sequence of the eighth chapter of the Epistle on the seventh is a study always interesting and fruitful. No one can read the two chapters over without feeling the strong connexion between them, a connexion at once of contrast and of complement. Great indeed is the contrast between the paragraph vii. 7-25 and the eighth chapter. The stern analysis of the one, unrelieved save by the fragment of thanksgiving at its close, (and even this is followed at once by a re-statement of the mysterious dualism,) is to the revelations and triumphs of the other as an almost starless night, stifling and electric, to the splendour of a midsummer morning with a yet more glorious morrow for its future. And there is complement as well as contrast. The day is related to the night, which has prepared us for it, as hunger prepares for food. Precisely what was absent from the former passage is supplied richly in the latter. There the Name of the Holy Spirit, "the Lord, the Life-Giver," was unheard. Here the fact and power of the Holy Spirit are present everywhere, so present that there is no other portion of the whole Scripture, unless we except the Redeemer's own Paschal Discourse, which presents us with so great a wealth of revelation on this

all-precious theme. And here we find the secret that is to "stint the strife" which we have just witnessed, and which in our own souls we know so well. Here is the way "*how* to walk and to please God" (1 Thess. iv. 1), in our justified life. Here is the way how, not to be as it were the victims of "the body," and the slaves of "the flesh," but to "*do to death the body's practices*" in a continuous exercise of inward power, and to "*walk after the Spirit.*" Here is the resource on which we may be for ever joyfully paying "*the debt*" of such a walk; giving our redeeming Lord His due, the value of His purchase, even our willing, loving surrender, in the all-sufficient strength of "the Holy Ghost given unto us."

Noteworthy indeed is the manner of the introduction of this glorious truth. It appears not without preparation and intimation; we have heard already of the Holy Ghost in the Christian's life, v. 5, vii. 6. The heavenly water has been seen and heard in its flow; as in a limestone country the traveller may see and hear, through fissures in the fields, the buried but living floods. But here the truth of the Spirit, like those floods, finding at last their exit at some rough cliff's base, pours itself into the light, and animates all the scene. In such an order and manner of treatment there is a spiritual and also a practical lesson. We are surely reminded, as to the experiences of the Christian life, that in a certain sense we possess the Holy Ghost, yea, in His fulness, from the first hour of our possession of Christ. We are reminded also that it is at least possible on the other hand that we may need so to realize and to use our covenant possession, after sad experiments in other directions, that life shall be thenceforth a new experience of liberty and holy joy. We are reminded meanwhile

that such a "new departure," when it occurs, is new rather from our side than from the Lord's. The water was running all the while below the rocks. Insight and faith, given by His grace, have not called it from above, but as it were from within, liberating what was there.

The practical lesson of this is important for the Christian teacher and pastor. On the one hand, let him make very much in his instructions, public and private, of the revelation of the Spirit. Let him leave no room, so far as he can do it, for doubt or oblivion in his friends' minds about the absolute necessity of the fulness of the presence and power of the Holy One, if life is to be indeed Christian. Let him describe as boldly and fully as the Word describes it what life may be, must be, where that sacred fulness dwells; how assured, how happy within, how serviceable around, how pure, free, and strong, how heavenly, how practical, how humble. Let him urge any who have yet to learn it to learn all this in their own experience, claiming on their knees the mighty gift of God. On the other hand, let him be careful not to overdraw his theory, and to prescribe too rigidly the methods of experience. Not all believers fail in the first hours of their faith to realize, and to use, the fulness of what the Covenant gives them. And where that realization comes later than our first sight of Christ, as with so many of us it does come, not always is the experience and action the same. To one it is a crisis of memorable consciousness, a private Pentecost. Another wakes up as from sleep to find the unsuspected treasure at his hand—hid from him till then by nothing thicker than shadows. And another is aware that somehow, he knows not how, he has come to use the Presence and Power as a while ago he did not; he has passed a frontier—but he knows not when.

In all these cases, meanwhile, the man had, in one great respect, possessed the great gift all along. In covenant, in Christ, it was his. As he stepped by penitent faith into the Lord, he trod on ground which, wonderful to say, was all his own. And beneath it ran, that moment, the River of the water of life. Only, he had to discover, to draw, and to apply.

Again, the relation we have just indicated between our possession of Christ and our possession of the Holy Ghost is a matter of the utmost moment, spiritual and practical, presented prominently in this passage. All along, as we read the passage, we find linked inextricably together the truths of the Spirit and of the Son. "*The law of the Spirit of life*" is bound up with "*Christ Jesus.*" The Son of God was sent, to take our flesh, to die as our Sin-Offering, that we might "*walk according to the Spirit.*" "*The Spirit of God*" is "*the Spirit of Christ.*" The presence of the Spirit of Christ is such that, where He dwells, "*Christ is in you.*" Here we read at once a caution, and a truth of the richest positive blessing. We are warned to remember that there is no *separable* "Gospel of the Spirit." Not for a moment are we to advance, as it were, from the Lord Jesus Christ to a higher or deeper region, ruled by the Holy Ghost. All the reasons, methods, and issues of the work of the Holy Ghost are eternally and organically connected with the Son of God. We have Him at all because Christ died. We have life because He has joined us to Christ living. Our experimental proof of His fulness is that Christ to us is all. And we are to be on the guard against any exposition of His work and glory which shall for one moment leave out those facts. But not only are we to be on our guard; we are to rejoice in the thought that the mighty, the endless, work of the

Spirit *is* all done always upon that sacred Field, Christ Jesus. And every day we are to draw upon the indwelling Giver of Life to do for us His own, His characteristic, work; to shew us "our King in His beauty," and to "fill our springs of thought and will with Him."

To return to the connexion of the two great chapters. We have seen how close and pregnant it is; the contrast and the complement. But it is also true, surely, that the eighth chapter is not merely and only the counterpart to the seventh. Rather the eighth, though the seventh applies to it a special motive, is also a review of the whole previous argument of the Epistle, or rather the crown on the whole previous structure. It begins with a deep re-assertion of our Justification; a point unnoticed in vii. 7-25. It does this using an inferential particle, "*therefore*," ἄρα—to which, surely, nothing in the just preceding verses is related. And then it unfolds not only the present acceptance and present liberty of the saints, but also their amazing future of glory, already indicated, especially in ch. v. 2. And its closing strains are full of the great first wonder, our Acceptance. "*Them He justified*"; "*It is God that justifieth.*" So we forbear to take ch. viii. as simply the successor and counterpart of ch. vii. It is this, in some great respects. But it is more; it is the meeting point of all the great truths of grace which we have studied, their meeting point in the sea of holiness and glory.*

As we approach the first paragraph of the chapter, we ask ourselves what is its message on the whole, its

* "In this surpassing chapter the several streams of the preceding arguments meet and flow in one 'river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb,' until it seems to lose itself in the ocean of a blissful eternity."—David Brown, D.D., "*The Epistle to the Romans*," in "*Handbooks for Bible Classes.*"

true *envoi*. It is, our possession of the Holy Spirit of God, for purposes of holy loyalty and holy liberty. The foundation of that fact is once more indicated, in the brief assertion of our full Justification in Christ, and of His propitiatory Sacrifice (ver. 3). Then from those words, "*in Christ*," he opens this ample revelation of our possession, in our union with Christ, of the Spirit who, having joined us to Him, now liberates us in Him, not from condemnation only but from sin's dominion. If we are indeed in Christ, the Spirit is in us, dwelling in us, and we are in the Spirit. And so, possessed and filled by the blessed Power, we indeed have power to walk and to obey. Nothing is mechanical, automatic; we are fully persons still; He who annexes and possesses our personality does not for a moment violate it. But then, He *does* possess it; and the Christian, so possessing and so possessed, is not only bound but enabled, in humble but practical reality, in a liberty otherwise unknown, to "*fulfil the just demand of the Law*," "*to please God*," in a life lived not to self but to Him.

Thus, as we shall see in detail as we proceed, the Apostle, while he still firmly keeps his hand, so to speak, on Justification, is occupied fully now with its issue, Holiness. And this issue he explains as not merely a matter of grateful feeling, the outcome of the loyalty supposed to be natural to the pardoned. He gives it as a matter of divine power, secured to them under the Covenant of their acceptance.

Shall we not enter on our expository study full of holy expectation, and with unspeakable desires awake, to receive all things which in that Covenant are ours? Shall we not remember, over every sentence, that in it Christ speaks by Paul, and speaks to us? For us

also, as for our spiritual ancestors, all this is true. It shall be true in us also, as it was in them.

We shall be humbled as well as gladdened; and thus our gladness will be sounder. We shall find that whatever be our "*walk according to the Spirit*," and our veritable dominion over sin, we shall still have "*the practices of the body*" with which to deal—of the body which still is "*dead because of sin*," "*mortal*," not yet "*redeemed*." We shall be practically reminded, even by the most joyous exhortations, that possession and personal condition are one thing in covenant, and another in realization; that we must watch, pray, examine self, and deny it, if we would "be" what we "are." Yet all this is but the salutary accessory to the blessed main burthen of every line. We are accepted in the Lord. In the Lord we have the Eternal Spirit for our inward Possessor. Let us arise, and "walk humbly," but also in gladness, "with our God."

St Paul speaks again, perhaps after a silence, and Tertius writes down for the first time the now immortal and beloved words. **So no adverse sentence is there now,** in view of this great fact of our redemption, **for those in Christ Jesus.*** "*In Christ Jesus*"—mysterious union, blessed fact, wrought by the Spirit who linked us sinners to the Lord.† **For the law of the Spirit of the**

Ver. 1.

Ver. 2.

* There can be no reasonable doubt that the words "*who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*," should be omitted. They are probably a *gloss* from ver. 4; inserted (perhaps first as a side-note) by scribes who failed to appreciate the profound simplicity of the Apostle's dictum.

† We thus indicate the thought given by the otherwise difficult "*For*" of ver. 2. That "*for*" cannot mean to imply that there is no condemnation *because the Spirit has enabled us to be holy*; this would stultify the whole argument of chapters iii.-v. What, in that context,

**life which is in Christ Jesus** * **freed me,** the man of the conflict just described, **from the law of sin and of death.** The "law," the preceptive will, which legislates the covenant of blessing for all who are in Christ, has set him free. By a strange, pregnant paradox, so we take it, the Gospel—the message which carries with it acceptance, and also holiness, by faith—is here called a "law." For while it is free grace to us it is also immovable ordinance with God. The amnesty is His edict. It is by heavenly *statute* that sinners, believing, possess the Holy Spirit in possessing Christ. And here, with a sublime abruptness and directness, that great gift of the Covenant, the Spirit, for which the Covenant gift of Justification was given, is put forward as the Covenant's characteristic and crown. It is for the moment as if this were all—that "*in Christ Jesus*" we, I, are under the *fiat* which assures to us the fulness of the Spirit. And this "law," unlike the stern "letter" of Sinai, has actually "*freed me.*" It has endowed me not only with place but with power, in which to live emancipated from a rival law, the law of sin and of death. And what is that rival "law"? We dare to say, it is the preceptive will of Sinai; "Do this, and thou shalt live." This is a hard saying; for in itself that very Law has been recently vindicated as holy, and just, and good, and spiritual. And only a few lines

it must imply is the complex fact (1) that *we are in Christ*—where there is no condemnation, and (2) that we are there *by the Holy Spirit*, who brought us to saving faith. Now we are to learn (3) what that Spirit has done *also* for us in giving us union with Christ.

* Τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. In the Greek of the N. T. it is possible so to interpret. Classical Greek would require τῆς ζωῆς τῆς ἐν X. Ἰ. The rendering, however, "*the law of the Spirit of life, in Christ Jesus,*" (making the last three words govern the whole previous thought,) is amply admissible.

above in the Epistle we have heard of a "law of sin" which is "served by the flesh." And we should unhesitatingly explain this "law" to be identical with that *but for the next verse here*, a still nearer context, in which "the law" is unmistakably the divine moral Code, considered however as *impotent*. Must not this and that be the same? And to call that sacred Code "*the Law of sin and of death*" is not to say that it is sinful and deathful. It need only mean, and we think it does mean, that it is sin's occasion, and death's warrant, by the unrelieved collision of its holiness with fallen man's will. It must command; he, being what he is, must rebel. He rebels; it must condemn. Then comes his Lord to die for him, and to rise again; and the Spirit comes, to unite him to his Lord. And now, from the Law as provoking the helpless, guilty will, and as claiming the sinner's penal death—behold the man is "*freed*." **For**—(the process is now explained at large) **the impossible of the Law**—what it could not do, for this was not its function, even to enable us sinners to keep its precept from the soul—**God, when He sent His own Son in likeness of flesh of sin**, Incarnate, in our identical nature, under all those conditions of earthly life which for us are sin's vehicles and occasions, **and as Sin-Offering**,* expiatory and reconciling, **sentenced sin in the flesh**; not pardoned it, observe, but sentenced it. He ordered it to execution; He killed its claim and its power for all who are in Christ. And this, "*in the flesh*," making man's earthly conditions the scene of sin's defeat, for our everlasting encouragement in our "life in the

Ver. 3.

* Περὶ ἁμαρτίας: the phrase is stamped with a sacrificial speciality by the Greek of the O. T. See *e.g.* Levit. xvi. 3, 5, 6, 9, 11, 15, 16, 25, 27. And cp. Heb. x. 8.

flesh." And what was the aim and issue? **That the righteous demand** (δικαίωμα) **of the Law might be fulfilled in us, us who walk not flesh-wise, but Spirit-wise**; that we, accepted in Christ, and using the Spirit's power in the daily "walk" of circumstance and experience, might be liberated from the life of self-will, and meet the will of God with simplicity and joy.

Ver. 4.

Such, and nothing less or else, was the Law's "*righteous demand*"; an obedience not only universal but also cordial. For its first requirement, "Thou shalt have no other God," meant, in the spiritual heart of it, the dethronement of self from its central place, and the session there of the Lord. But this could never be while there was a reckoning still unsettled between the man and God. Friction there must be while God's Law remained not only violated but unsatisfied, unatoned.* And so it necessarily remained, till the sole adequate Person, one with God, one with man, stepped into the gap; our Peace, our Righteousness, and also by the Holy Ghost our Life. At rest because of His sacrifice, at work by the power of His Spirit, we are now free to love, and divinely enabled to walk in love. Meanwhile the dream of an unsinning perfectness, such as could make a meritorious claim, is not so much negatived as precluded, put far out of the question. For the central truth of the new position is that THE LORD has fully dealt, for us, with the Law's claim that man shall *deserve* acceptance. "Boasting" is inexorably "excluded," to the last, from this new kind of law-fulfilling life. For the "fulfilment" which means legal satisfaction is for ever taken out of our hands by Christ,

* "The way of him that is laden with guilt is exceeding crooked." Prov. xxi. 8 R.V.

and only that humble "fulfilment" is ours which means a restful, unanxious, reverent, unreserved loyalty in practice. To this now our "*mind*," our cast and gravitation of soul, is brought, in the life of acceptance, and in the power of the Spirit. Ver. 5. **For they who are flesh-wise,** the unchanged children of the self-life, **think,** "*mind*," have moral affinity and converse with, **the things of the flesh; but they who are Spirit-wise, think the things of the Spirit,** His love, joy, peace, and all that holy "fruit." Their liberated and Spirit-bearing life now goes that way, in its true bias.

Ver. 6. **For the mind,** the moral affinity, **of the flesh,** of the self-life, **is death;** it involves the ruin of the soul, in condemnation, and in separation from God; **but the mind of the Spirit,** the affinity given to the believer by the indwelling Holy One, **is life and peace;** it implies union with Christ, our life and our acceptance; it is the state of soul in which He is realized. **Because**

Ver. 7. —this absolute antagonism of the two "*minds*" is such *because*—**the "mind" of the flesh is personal hostility** (ἔχθρα) **towards God; for to God's Law it is not subject. For indeed it cannot be** subject to it;

Ver. 8. —**those*** **who are in flesh,** surrendered to the life of self as their law, **cannot please God,**† "*cannot meet the wish*" (ἀρέσαι) of Him whose loving but absolute claim is to be Lord of the whole man.

"*They cannot*": it is a moral impossibility. "The Law of God" is, "Thou shalt love Me with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself"; the mind of the

* We do not translate the δέ. It seems to be best represented in English by connecting the clause only by position with what goes before.

† The Greek lays a solemn emphasis by position on Θεῷ.

flesh is, "I will love my self and its will first and most." Let this be disguised as it may, even from the man himself; it is always the same thing in its essence. It may mean a defiant choice of open evil. It may mean a subtle and almost evanescent preference of literature, or art, or work, or home, to God's will as such. It is in either case "*the mind of the flesh*," a thing which cannot be refined and educated into holiness, but must be surrendered at discretion, as its eternal enemy.

Ver. 9. **But you** (there is a glad emphasis on "*you*") **are not in flesh, but in Spirit,** surrendered to the indwelling Presence as your law and secret, **on the assumption that** (εἴπερ: he suggests not weary misgivings but a true examination) **God's Spirit dwells in you**; has His home in your hearts, humbly welcomed into a continuous residence. **But if any one has not Christ's Spirit,** (who is the Spirit as of the Father so of the Son, sent by the Son, to reveal and to impart Him,) **that man is not His.** He may bear his Lord's name, he may be externally a Christian, he may enjoy the divine Sacraments of union; but he has not "the Thing." The Spirit, evidenced by His holy fruit, is no Indweller there; and the Spirit is our vital Bond with Christ. Ver. 10. **But if Christ is,** thus by the Spirit, **in you,** dwelling by faith in the hearts which the Spirit has "strengthened" to receive Christ (Eph. iii. 16, 17)—**true** (μὲν), **the body is dead, because of sin,** the primeval sentence still holds its way *there*; the body is deathful still, it is the body of the Fall; **but the Spirit** * **is life,** He is in that body, your secret of power

* We refer the word πνεῦμα here, as throughout the passage, to the Holy Ghost. No other interpretation seems either consistent with the whole context, or adequate to its grandeur.

and peace eternal, **because of righteousness**, because of the merit of your Lord, in which you are accepted, and which has won for you this wonderful Spirit-life.

Then even for the body there is assured a glorious future, organically one with this living present. Let us listen as he goes on: **But if the Spirit of** Ver. 11. **Him who raised Jesus**, the slain Man, **from the dead, dwells in you, He who raised from the dead Christ Jesus**, the Man so revealed and glorified as the Anointed Saviour, **shall also bring to life your mortal bodies, because of** (*διὰ τὸ κτλ* *) **His Spirit, dwelling in you.** That "frail temple," once so much defiled, and so defiling, is now precious to the Father because it is the habitation of the Spirit of His Son. Nor only so; that same Spirit, who, by uniting us to Christ, made actual our redemption, shall surely, in ways to us unknown, carry the process to its glorious crown, and be somehow the Efficient Cause of "the redemption of our body."

Wonderful is this deep characteristic of the Scripture; its Gospel for the body. In Christ, the body is seen to be something far different from the mere clog, or prison, or chrysalis, of the soul. It is its destined implement, may we not say its mighty wings in prospect, for the life of glory. As invaded by sin, it must needs pass through either death or, at the Lord's Return, an equivalent transfiguration. But as created in God's plan of Human Nature it is for ever congenial to the

* We read thus, not *διὰ τοῦ κτλ* (*"by means of, by the agency of, His Spirit"*). The two readings have each strong support, but we think the balance of evidence is for the accusative not the genitive. Happily the exegetical difference is not serious. The accusative gives indeed a meaning which may well include that given by the genitive, while it includes other ideas also.

soul, nay, it is necessary to the soul's full action. And whatever be the mysterious mode (it is absolutely hidden from us as yet) of the event of Resurrection, this we know, if only from this Oracle, that the glory of the immortal body will have profound relations with the work of God in the sanctified soul. No mere material sequences will bring it about. It will be "*because of the Spirit*"; and "because of the Spirit *dwelling in you*," as your power for holiness in Christ.*

So the Christian reads the account of his present spiritual wealth, and of his coming completed life, "his perfect consummation and bliss in the eternal glory." Let him take it home, with most humble but quite decisive assurance, as he looks again, and believes again, on his redeeming Lord. For him, in his inexpressible need, God has gone about to provide "so great salvation." He has accepted his person in His Son who died for him. He has not only *forgiven him* through that great Sacrifice, but in it He has "*condemned*," sentenced to chains and death, *his sin*, which is now a doomed thing, beneath his feet, in Christ. And He has given to him, as personal and perpetual Indweller, to be claimed, hailed, and used by humble faith, His own Eternal Spirit, the Spirit of His Son, the Blessed One who, dwelling infinitely in the Head,

* We are aware that ver. 11 has been sometimes interpreted of present blessings for the body; as if the fulness of the Holy Ghost was to effect a quasi-glorification of the body's condition now; exempting it from illness, and at least retarding its decay. But this seems untenable. If the words point this way at all, ought they not to mean a literal exemption from death altogether? But this manifestly was not in the Apostle's mind, if we take his writings as a whole. That spiritual blessings may, and often do, act wonderfully in the life of the body, is most true. But that is not the truth of this verse.

comes to dwell fully in the members, and make Head and members wonderfully one. Now then let him give himself up with joy, thanksgiving, and expectation, to the "*fulfilling of the righteous demand of God's Law*," "*walking Spirit-wise*," with steps moving ever away from self and towards the will of God. Let him meet the world, the devil, and that mysterious "flesh," (all ever in potential presence,) with no less a Name than that of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Let him stand up not as a defeated and disappointed combatant, maimed, half-blinded, half-persuaded to succumb, but as one who treads upon "all the power of the enemy," in Christ, by the indwelling Spirit. And let him reverence his mortal body, even while he "keeps it in subjection," and while he willingly tires it, or gives it to suffer, for his Lord. For it is the temple of the Spirit. It is the casket of the hope of glory.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### *HOLINESS BY THE SPIRIT, AND THE GLORIES THAT SHALL FOLLOW*

ROMANS viii. 12-25

NOW the Apostle goes on to develop these noble premisses into conclusions. How true to himself, and to his Inspirer, is the line he follows! First come the most practical possible of reminders of duty; then, and in profound connexion, the inmost experiences of the regenerate soul in both its joy and its sorrow, and the most radiant and far-reaching prospects of glory to come. We listen still, always remembering that this letter from Corinth to Rome is to reach us too, by way of the City. He who moved His servant to send it to Aquila and Herodion had us too in mind, and has now carried out His purpose. It is open in our hands for our faith, love, hope, life to-day.

St Paul begins with Holiness viewed as Duty, as Debt. He has led us through our vast treasury of privilege and possession. What are we to do with it? Shall we treat it as a museum, in which we may occasionally observe the mysteries of New Nature, and with more or less learning discourse upon them? Shall we treat it as the unwatchful King * of old treated his

* 2 Kings xx. 12, 13.

splendid stores, making them his personal boast, and so betraying them to the very power which one day was to make them all its spoil? No, we are to live upon our Lord's magnificent bounty—to His glory, and in His will. We are rich; but it is for Him. We have His talents; and those talents, in respect of His grace, as distinct from His "gifts," are not one, nor five, nor ten, but ten thousand—for they are Jesus Christ. But we have them all *for Him*. We are free from the law of sin and of death; but we are in perpetual and delightful debt to Him who has freed us. And our debt is—to walk with Him.

"*So, brethren, we are debtors.*" Thus our new paragraph begins. For a moment he turns to say what we owe *no* debt to; even "*the flesh*," the self-life. But it is plain that his main purpose is positive, not negative. He implies in the whole rich context that we are debtors to the Spirit, to the Lord, "to walk Spirit-wise."

What a salutary thought it is! Too often in the Christian Church the great word Holiness has been practically banished to a supposed almost inaccessible background, to the steeps of a spiritual ambition, to a region where a few might with difficulty climb in the quest, men and women who had "leisure to be good," or who perhaps had exceptional instincts for piety. God be thanked, He has at all times kept many consciences alive to the illusion of such a notion; and in our own day, more and more, His mercy brings it home to His children that "this is His will, even the sanctification"—not of some of them, but of all. Far and wide we are reviving to see, as the fathers of our faith saw before us, that whatever else holiness is, it is a sacred and binding *debt*. It is not an ambition; it is a duty. We are bound, every one of us who names the name of Christ,

to be holy, to be separate from evil, to walk by the Spirit.

Alas for the misery of indebtedness, when funds fall short! Whether the unhappy debtor examines his affairs, or guiltily ignores their condition, he is—if his conscience is not dead—a haunted man. But when an honourable indebtedness concurs with ample means, then one of the moral pleasures of life is the punctual scrutiny and discharge. "He hath it by him"; and it is his happiness, as it is assuredly his duty, *not* to "say to his neighbour, Go and come again, and to-morrow I will give" (Prov. iii. 28).

Christian brother, partaker of Christ, and of the Spirit, we also owe, to Him who owns. But it is an indebtedness of the happy type. Once we owed, and there was worse than nothing in the purse. Now we owe, and we have Christ in us, by the Holy Ghost, wherewithal to pay. The eternal Neighbour comes to us, with no frowning look, and shews us His holy demand; to live to-day a life of truth, of purity, of confession of His Name, of unselfish serviceableness, of glad forgiveness, of unbroken patience, of practical sympathy, of the love which seeks not her own. What shall we say? That it is a beautiful ideal, which we should like to realize, and may yet some day seriously attempt? That it is admirable, but impossible? Nay; "we are debtors." And He who claims has first immeasurably given. We have His Son for our acceptance and our life. His very Spirit is in us. Are not these good resources for a genuine solvency? "Say not, Go and come again; I will pay Thee—to-morrow. *Thou hast it by thee!*"

Holiness is beauty. But it is first duty, practical and present, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Ver. 12. **So then, brethren, debtors are we—not to the flesh, with a view to living flesh-wise**; but to the Spirit—who is now both our law and our power—with a view to living Spirit-wise. **For if you are living flesh-wise, you are on the way** (μέλλετε) **to die. But if by the Spirit you are doing to death*** **the practices,** the stratagems, the machinations, **of the body, you will live.** Ah, the body is still there, and is still a seat and vehicle of temptation. "It is for the Lord, and the Lord is for it" (1 Cor. vi. 13). It is the temple of the Spirit. Our call is (1 Cor. vi. 20) to glorify God in it. But all this, *from our point of view*, passes from realization into mere theory, wofully gainsaid by experience, when we let our acceptance in Christ, and our possession in Him of the Almighty Spirit, pass out of use into mere phrase. Say what some men will, we are never for an hour here below exempt from elements and conditions of evil residing not merely around us but within us. There is no stage of life when we can dispense with the power of the Holy Ghost as our victory and deliverance from "*the machinations of the body.*" And the body is no separate and as it were minor personality. If the man's body "machinates," it is the man who is the sinner.

But then, thanks be to God, this fact is not the real burthen of the words here. What St Paul has to say is that the man who has the indwelling Spirit has with him, in him, a divine and all-effectual Counter-Agent to the subtlest of his foes. Let him do what we saw him above (vii. 7-25) neglecting to do. Let him with conscious purpose, and firm recollection of his wonderful position and possession (so easily forgotten!), call up the eternal Power which is indeed not himself, though

* Θανατοῦτε: observe the present tense, the process is a continuing one.

in himself. Let him do this with *habitual* recollection and simplicity. And he shall be "more than conqueror" where he was so miserably defeated. His path shall be as of one who walks over foes who threatened, but who fell, and who die at his feet. It shall be less a struggle than a march, over a battlefield indeed, yet a field of victory so continuous that it shall be as peace.

"*If by the Spirit you are doing them to death.*" Mark well the words. He says nothing here of things often thought to be of the essence of spiritual remedies; nothing of "will-worship, and humility, and unsparing treatment of the body" (Col. ii. 23); nothing even of fast and prayer. Sacred and precious is self-discipline, the watchful care that act and habit are true to that "temperance" which is a vital ingredient in the Spirit's "fruit" (Gal. v. 22, 23). It is the Lord's own voice (Matt. xxvi. 41) which bids us always "watch and pray"; "praying in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 20). Yes, but these true exercises of the believing soul are after all only as the covering fence around that central secret—our use by faith of the presence and power of "the Holy Ghost given unto us." The Christian who neglects to watch and pray will most surely find that he knows not how to use this his great strength, for he will be losing realization of his oneness with his Lord. But then the man who actually, and in the depth of his being, is "doing to death the practices of the body," is doing so, *immediately*, not by discipline, nor by direct effort, but by the believing use of "the Spirit." Filled with Him, he treads upon the power of the enemy. And that fulness is according to surrendering faith.

Ver. 14. **For as many as are led by God's Spirit, these are God's sons; for you did not receive a spirit of slavery,** to take you **back again** (*πάλιν*) **to fear; no,**

**you received a Spirit of adoption to sonship, in which**
Ver. 15. Spirit, surrendered to His holy power, **we cry,** with no bated, hesitating breath, "**Abba, our** (ὁ) **Father.**" His argument runs thus; "If you would live indeed, you must do sin to death by the Spirit. And this means, in another aspect, that you must yield yourselves to be led along by the Spirit, with that leading which is sure to conduct you always away from self and into the will of God. You must welcome the Indweller to have His holy way with your springs of thought and will. So, and only so, will you truly answer the idea, the description, 'sons of God'—that glorious term, never to be *satisfied* by the relation of mere creaturehood, or by that of merely exterior sanctification, mere membership in a community of men, though it be the Visible Church itself. But if you so meet sin by the Spirit, if you are so led by the Spirit, you do shew yourselves nothing less than God's own sons. He has called you to nothing lower than sonship; to vital connexion with a divine Father's life, and to the eternal embraces of His love. For when He gave and you received the Spirit, the Holy Spirit of promise, who reveals Christ and joins you to Him, what did that Spirit do, in His heavenly operation? Did He lead you back to the old position, in which you shrunk from God, as from a Master who bound you against your will? No, He shewed you that in the Only Son you are nothing less than sons, welcomed into the inmost home of eternal life and love. You found yourselves indescribably near the Father's heart, because accepted, and new-created, in His Own Beloved. And so you learnt the happy, confident call of the child, 'Father, O Father; Our Father, Abba.'"*

* The Aramaic "*Abba,*" used by our Lord in His hour of darkness, had probably become an almost personal Name to the believers.

So it was, and so it is. The living member of Christ is nothing less than the dear child of God. He is other things besides; he is disciple, follower, bondservant. He never ceases to be bondservant, though here he is expressly told that he has received no "spirit of slavery." So far as "slavery" means service forced against the will, he has done with this, in Christ. But so far as it means service rendered by one who is his master's absolute property, he has entered into its depths, for ever. Yet all this is exterior as it were to that inmost fact, that he is—in a sense ultimate, and which alone really fulfils the word—the child, the son, of God. He is dearer than he can know to his Father. He is more welcome than he can ever realize to take his Father at His word, and lean upon His heart, and tell Him all.

Ver. 16. **The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are God's children,** born children, τεκνά. The Holy One, on His part, makes the once cold, reluctant, apprehensive heart "know and believe the love of God." He "sheds abroad God's love in it." He brings home to consciousness and insight the "sober certainty" of the promises of the Word; that Word through which, above all other means, He speaks. He shews to the man "the things of Christ," the Beloved, in whom he has the adoption and the regeneration; making him see, as souls see, what a paternal welcome there *must* be for those who are "in HIM." And then, on the other part, the believer meets Spirit with spirit. He responds to the revealed paternal smile with not merely a subject's loyalty but a son's deep love; deep, reverent, tender, genuine love. "Doubtless thou art His own child," says the Spirit. "Doubtless He is my Father," says our wondering, believing, seeing spirit in response.

Ver. 17. **But if children,** then **also heirs; God's heirs, Christ's co-heirs,** possessors in prospect of our Father's heaven (towards which the whole argument now gravitates), in union of interest and life with our First-born Brother, in whom lies our right. From one hand a gift, infinitely merciful and surprising, that unseen bliss will be from another the lawful portion of the lawful child, one with the Beloved of the Father. Such heirs we are, **if indeed we share His sufferings,** those deep but hallowed pains which will surely come to us as we live in and for Him in a fallen world, **that we may also share His glory,** for which that path of sorrow is, not indeed the meriting, but the capacitating, preparation.

Amidst the truths of life and love, of the Son, of the Spirit, of the Father, he thus throws in the truth of pain. Let us not forget it. In one form or another, it is for all "*the children.*" Not all are martyrs, not all are exiles or captives, not all are called as a fact to meet open insults in a defiant world of paganism or unbelief. Many are still so called, as many were at first, and as many will be to the end; for "the world" is no more now than it ever was in love with God, and with His children as such. But even for those whose path is—not by themselves but the Lord—most protected, there must be "*suffering,*" somehow, sooner, later, in this present life, if they are really living the life of the Spirit, the life of the child of God, "paying the debt" of daily holiness, even in its humblest and gentlest forms. We must observe, by the way, that it is to *such* sufferings, and not to sorrows in general, that the reference lies here. The Lord's heart is open for all the griefs of His people, and He can use them all for their blessing and for His ends. But the "suffering *with Him*" must imply a pain *due to our union.* It

must be involved in our being His members, used by the Head for His work. It must be the hurt of His "hand" or "foot" in subserving His sovereign thought. What will the bliss be of the corresponding sequel! "That we may *share His glory*"; not merely, "be glorified," but share His glory; a splendour of life, joy, and power whose eternal law and soul will be, union with Him who died for us and rose again.

Now towards that prospect St Paul's whole thought sets, as the waters set towards the moon, and the mention of that glory, after suffering, draws him to a sight of the mighty "plurity" of the glory. **For I reckon,** "*I calculate*"—word of sublimest *prose*, more moving here than any poetry, because it bids us handle the hope of glory *as a fact*—**that not worthy** of mention **are the sufferings of the present season** (καιροῦ, not χρόνου; he thinks of time not in its length but in its limit), **in view of the glory about to be unveiled upon us** (εἰς ἡμᾶς), unveiled, and then heaped upon us, in its golden fulness.* **For**—he is going to give us a deep reason for his "calculation"; wonderfully characteristic of the Gospel. It is that the final glory of the saints will be a crisis of mysterious blessing for the whole created Universe.† In ways absolutely unknown, certainly as regards anything said in this passage, but none the less divinely fit and sure, the ultimate and eternal manifestation of Christ Mystical, the Perfect Head with His perfected members, will be the occasion, and in some sense too the cause, the

Ver. 18.

Ver. 19.

* With this verse on his lips, unfinished, Calvin died, 1564.

† We cannot think that the κτίσις of this passage refers only, as some would have it, *to humanity* (as Mark xvi. 15, Col. i. 23). The κτίσις is a something which was "subjected" *involuntarily*, and so, surely, not guiltily. This could not be said of humanity.

mediating cause, of the emancipation of "Nature," in its heights and depths, from the cancer of decay, and its entrance on an endless æon of indissoluble life and splendour. Doubtless that goal shall be reached through long processes and intense crises of strife and death. "Nature," like the saint, may need to pass to glory through a tomb. But the issue will indeed be glory, when He who is the Head at once of "Nature,"* of the heavenly nations, and of redeemed man, shall bid the vast periods of conflict and dissolution cease, in the hour of eternal purpose, and shall manifestly "*be* what He *is*" to the mighty total.

With such a prospect natural philosophy has nothing to do. Its own laws of observation and tabulation forbid it to make a single affirmation of what the Universe shall be, or shall not be, under new and unknown conditions. Revelation, with no arbitrary voice, but as the authorized while reserved messenger of THE MAKER, and standing by the open Grave of the Resurrection, announces that there are to be profoundly new conditions, and that they bear a relation inscrutable but necessary to the coming glorification of Christ and His Church. And what we now see and feel as the imperfections and shocks and seeming failures of the Universe, so we learn from this voice, a voice so quiet yet so triumphant, are only as it were the throes of birth, in which "Nature," impersonal indeed but so to speak animated by the thinking of the intelligent orders who are a part of her universal being, preludes her wonderful future.

Ver. 19. **For the longing outlook of the creation is expecting—the unveiling of the sons of God.**

* See Col. i. 15, 16. The Lord's Headship of Creation, explicitly revealed there, is seen as it were only just below the surface here.

**For to vanity**, to evil, to failure and decay, **the creation was subjected not willingly, but because of Him who made it subject**; its Lord and Sustainer, who in His inscrutable but holy will bade physical evil correspond to the moral evil of His conscious fallen creatures, angels or men. So that there is a deeper connexion than we can yet analyse between sin, the primal and central evil, and everything that is really wreck or pain. But this "subjection," under His *fiat*, was **in hope, because the creation itself shall be liberated from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God**, the freedom brought in for *it* by *their* eternal liberation from the last relics of the Fall. **For we know**, by observation of natural evil, in the light of the promises, **that the whole creation is uttering a common groan** of burthen and yearning, **and suffering a common birth-pang, even till now**, when the Gospel has heralded the coming glory. **Nor only so, but even the actual possessors of the firstfruits of the Spirit**, possessors of that presence of the Holy One in them now, which is the sure pledge of His eternal fulness yet to come, **even we ourselves**, richly blest as we are in our wonderful Spirit-life, **yet in ourselves are groaning**, burthened still with mortal conditions pregnant of temptation, lying not around us only but deep within (ἐν ἑαυτοῖς), **expecting adoption**, full instatement into the fruition of the sonship which already is ours, even **the redemption of our body.**

Ver. 20.

Ver. 21.

Ver. 22.

Ver. 23.

From the coming glories of the Universe he returns, in the consciousness of an inspired but human heart, to the present discipline and burthen of the Christian. Let us observe the noble candour of the words; this "*groan*" interposed in the midst of such a song of the Spirit and

of glory. He has no ambition to pose as the possessor of an impossible experience. He is more than conqueror; but he is conscious of his foes. The Holy Ghost is in him; he does the body's practices victoriously to death by the Holy Ghost. But the body is there, as the seat and vehicle of manifold temptation. And though there is a joy in victory which can sometimes make even the presence of temptation seem "all joy" (Jas i. 2), he knows that something "far better" is yet to come. His longing is not merely for a personal victory, but for an eternally unhindered service. That will not fully be his till his whole being is actually, as well as in covenant, redeemed. That will not be till not the spirit only but the body is delivered from the last dark traces of the Fall, in the resurrection hour.

Ver. 24. **For it is as to our (τῇ) hope that we were saved.** When the Lord laid hold of us we were indeed saved,* but with a salvation which was only in part actual. Its total was not to be realized till the whole being was in actual salvation. Such salvation (see below, xiii. 11) was coincident in prospect with "the Hope," "that blessed Hope,"† the Lord's Return and the resurrection glory. So, to paraphrase this clause, "*It was in the sense of the Hope that we were saved.*"‡ **But a hope in sight is not a hope; for, what a man sees, why does he hope for?** Hope, in that case, has, in its nature, expired in possession. And our full "salvation" *is* a hope; it is bound up with a Promise not yet fulfilled; therefore, in its nature,

* See the *perfect* participle, σεσωσμένοι, Eph. ii. 5, 8.

† Is ἡ ἐλπὶς ever used in the N.T. in any other connexion than this?

‡ Luther's rendering is good as a paraphrase, *Wir sind wohl selig, doch in der Hoffnung.*

it is still unseen, still unattained. But then, it is certain; it is infinitely valid; it is worth any waiting for. Ver. 24. **But if, for what we do not see, we do hope,** looking on good grounds for the sunrise in the dark east, **with patience we expect it.** "*With patience,*" literally "*through patience,*" δι' ὑπομονῆς. The "patience" is as it were the means, the secret, of the waiting; "patience," that noble word of the New Testament vocabulary, the saint's active submission, submissive action, beneath the will of God. It is no nerveless, motionless prostration; it is the going on and upward, step by step, as the man "waits upon the Lord, and walks, and does not faint."

## CHAPTER XIX

*THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER IN THE SAINTS: THEIR PRESENT AND ETERNAL WELFARE IN THE LOVE OF GOD*

ROMANS viii. 26-39

IN the last paragraph the music of this glorious didactic prophecy passed, in some solemn phrases, into the minor mood. "*If we share His sufferings*"; "*The sufferings of this present season*"; "*We groan within ourselves*"; "*In the sense of our hope we were saved.*" All is well. The deep harmony of the Christian's full experience, if it is full downwards as well as upwards, demands sometimes such tones; and they are all music, for they all express a life in Christ, lived by the power of the Holy Ghost. But now the strain is to ascend again into its largest and most triumphant manner. We are now to hear how our salvation, though its ultimate issues are still things of hope, is itself a thing of eternity—from everlasting to everlasting. We are to be made sure that all things are working now, in concurrent action, for the believer's good; and that his justification is sure; and that his glory is so certain that its future is, from his Lord's point of sight, present; and that nothing, absolutely nothing, shall separate him from the eternal Love.

But first comes one most deep and tender word, the last of its kind in the long argument, about the presence

and power of the Holy Ghost. The Apostle has the "groan" of the Christian still in his ear, in his heart; in fact, it is his own. And he has just pointed himself and his fellow believers to the coming glory, as to a wonderful antidote; a prospect which is at once great in itself and unspeakably suggestive of *the greatness* given to the most suffering and tempted saint by his union with his Lord. As if to say to the pilgrim, in his moment of distress, "Remember, you are more to God than you can possibly know; He has made you such, in Christ, that universal Nature is concerned in the prospect of your glory." But now, as if nothing must suffice but what is directly divine, he bids him remember also the presence in him of the Eternal Spirit, as his mighty but tenderest indwelling Friend. Even as "that blessed Hope," so, "*likewise also*," this blessed present Person, is the weak one's power. He takes the man in his bewilderment, when troubles from without press him, and fears from within make him groan, and he is in sore need, yet at a loss for the right cry. And He moves in the tired soul, and breathes Himself into its thought, and His mysterious "groan" of divine yearning mingles with our groan of burthen, and the man's longings go out above all things not towards rest but towards God and His will. So the Christian's innermost and ruling desire is both fixed and animated by the blessed Indweller, and he seeks what the Lord will love to grant, even Himself and whatever shall please Him. The man prays aright, as to the essence of the prayer, because (what a divine miracle is put before us in the words!) the Holy Ghost, immanent in him, prays through him.

Thus we venture, in advance, to explain the sentences which now follow. It is true that St Paul does not

explicitly say that the Spirit makes intercession *in* us, as well as *for* us. But must it not be so? For *where is He*, from the point of view of Christian life, but *in us*?

Ver. 26. **Then, in the same way, the Spirit also**—as well as "the hope"—**helps,** as with a clasping, supporting hand (*συναντιλαμβάνεται*), **our weakness,*** our shortness and bewilderment of insight, our feebleness of faith. **For what we should pray for as we ought, we do not know; but the Spirit Itself interposes to intercede** (*ὑπερεντυγχάνει*) **for us, with groanings unutterable; but** (whatever be the utterance or no utterance)

Ver. 27. **the Searcher of our** (*τὰς*) **hearts knows what is the mind,** the purport, **of the Spirit; because God-wise,**† with divine insight and sympathy, the Spirit with the Father, **He intercedes for saints.**

Did He not so intercede for Paul, and in him, fourteen years before these words were written, when (2 Cor. xii. 7-10) the man thrice asked that "the thorn" might be removed, and the Master gave him a better blessing, the victorious overshadowing power? Did He not so intercede for Monnica, and in her, when she sought with prayers and tears to keep her rebellious Augustine by her, and the Lord let him fly from her side—to Italy, to Ambrose, and so to conversion?‡

But the strain rises now, finally and fully, into the rest and triumph of faith. "*We know not* what we should pray for as we ought"; and the blessed Spirit meets this deep need in His own way. And this, with all else that we have in Christ, reminds us of a somewhat

* Read *ἀσθενείᾳ*.

† So we venture to render *κατὰ Θεόν*.

‡ *Confessiones*, v. 8.

that "*we know*" indeed; namely, that all things, favourable or not in themselves, concur in blessing for the saints. And then he looks backward (or rather, upward) into eternity, and sees the throne, and the King with His sovereign will, and the lines of perfect and infallible plan and provision which stretch from that Centre to infinity. These "*saints*," who are they? From one view-point, they are simply sinners who have seen themselves, and "fled for refuge to the" one possible "hope"; a "hope set before" every soul that cares to win it. From another view-point, that of the eternal Mind and Order, they are those whom, for reasons infinitely wise and just, but wholly hidden in Himself, the Lord has chosen to be His own for ever, so that His choice takes effect in their conversion, their acceptance, their spiritual transformation, and their glory.

There, as regards this great passage, the thought rests and ceases—in the glorification of the saints. What their Glorifier will do with them, and through them, thus glorified, is another matter. Assuredly He will *make use* of them in His eternal kingdom. The Church, made most blessed for ever, is yet beatified, ultimately, not for itself but for its Head, and for His Father. It is to be, in its final perfectness, "an habitation of God, in the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 22). Is He not so to possess it that the Universe shall see Him in it, in a manner and degree now unknown and unimaginable? Is not the endless "service" of the elect to be such that all orders of being shall through them behold and adore the glory of the Christ of God? For ever they will be what they here become, the bondservants of their Redeeming Lord, His Bride, His vehicle of power and blessing; "having of their own nothing, in Him all, and all for Him." No self-full

exaltations await them in the place of light; or the whole history of sin would begin over again, in a new æon. No celestial Pharisaism will be their spirit; a look downward upon less blessed regions of existence, as from a sanctuary of their own. Who can tell what ministries of boundless love will be the expression of their life of inexpressible and inexhaustible joy? Always, like Gabriel, "in the presence," will they not always also, like him, "be sent" (Luke i. 19) on the messages of their glorious Head, in whom at length, in the "divine event," "all things shall be gathered together"?

But this is not the thought of the passage now in our hands. Here, as we have said, the thought terminates in the final glorification of the saints of God, as the immediate goal of the process of their redemption.

Ver. 28. **But we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, even for those who, purpose-wise, are His called ones.** "*We know it*," with the cognition of faith; that is to say, because He, absolutely trustworthy, guarantees it by His character, and by His word. Deep, nay insoluble is the mystery, from every other point of view. The lovers of the Lord are indeed unable to explain, to themselves or others, how this concurrence of "all things" works out its infallible issues in them. And the observer from outside cannot understand their certainty that it is so. But the fact is there, given and assured, not by speculation upon events, but by personal knowledge of an Eternal Person. "Love God, and thou shalt know."*

They "love God," with a love perfectly unartificial, the genuine affection of human hearts, hearts not the less human because divinely new-created, regenerated from

* See a noble poem by James Montgomery, *The Lot of the Righteous*.

above. Their immediate consciousness is just this; we love Him. Not, we have read the book of life; we have had a glimpse of the eternal purpose in itself; we have heard our names recited in a roll of the chosen; but, we love Him. We have found in Him the eternal Love. In Him we have peace, purity, and that deep, final satisfaction, that view of "the King in His beauty," which is the *summum bonum* of the creature. It was our fault that we saw it no sooner, that we loved Him no sooner. It is the duty of every soul that He has made to reflect upon its need of Him, and upon the fact that it owes it to Him to love Him in His holy beauty of eternal Love. If we could not it was because we would not. If you cannot it is because, somehow and somewhere, you will not; will not put yourselves without reserve in the way of the sight. "Oh taste and see that the Lord is good"; oh love the eternal Love.

But those who thus simply and genuinely love God are also, on the other side, "*purpose-wise, His called ones*"; "*called*," in the sense which we have found above (p. 19) to be consistently traceable in the Epistles; not merely invited, but brought in; not evangelized only, but converted. In each case of the happy company, the man, the woman, came to Christ, came to love God with the freest possible coming of the will, the heart. Yet each, having come, had the Lord to thank for the coming. The human personality had traced its orbit of will and deed, as truly as when it willed to sin and to rebel. But lo, in ways past our finding out, its free track lay along a previous track of the purpose of the Eternal; its free "*I will*" was the precise and fore-ordered correspondence to His "*Thou shalt.*" It was the act of man; it was the grace of God.

Can we get below such a statement, or above it?

If we are right in our reading of the whole teaching of Scripture on the sovereignty of God, our thoughts upon it, practically, must sink down, and must rest, just here. The doctrine of the Choice of God, in its sacred mystery, refuses—so we humbly think—to be explained away so as to mean in effect little but the choice of man. But then the doctrine is "a lamp, not a sun." It is presented to us everywhere, and not least in this Epistle, as a truth not meant to explain everything, but to enforce *this* thing—that the man who as a fact loves the eternal Love has to thank not himself but that Love that his eyes, guiltily shut, were effectually opened. Not one link in the chain of actual Redemption is of our forging—or the whole would indeed be fragile. It is "of Him" that we, in this great matter, will as we ought to will. I ought to have loved God always. It is of His mere mercy that I love Him now.

With this lesson of uttermost humiliation the truth of the heavenly Choice, and its effectual Call, brings us also that of an encouragement altogether divine. Such a "purpose" is no fluctuating thing, shifting with the currents of time. Such a call to such an embrace means a tenacity, as well as a welcome, worthy of God. "Who shall separate us?" "Neither shall any pluck them out of My Father's hand." And this is the motive of the words in this wonderful context, where everything is made to bear on *the safety* of the children of God, in the midst of all imaginable dangers.

Ver. 29. **For whom He knew beforehand,** with a foreknowledge which, in this argument, can mean nothing short of foredecision*—no mere foreknowledge of what they would do, but rather of what He would

* See *e.g.* xi. 2; Acts ii. 23; 1 Pet. i. 2, 20.

do for them—**those He also set apart beforehand, for conformation**, deep and genuine, a resemblance due to kindred *being*,* **to the image**, the manifested Countenance, **of His Son, that He might be Firstborn amongst many brethren**, surrounded by the circling host of kindred faces, congenial beings, His Father's children by their union with Himself. So, as ever in the Scriptures, mystery bears full on character. The man is saved that he may be holy. His "*predestination*" † is not merely not to perish, but to be made like Christ, in a spiritual transformation, coming out in the moral features of the family of heaven. And all bears ultimately on the glory of Christ. The gathered saints are an organism, a family, before the Father; and their vital Centre is the Beloved Son, who sees in their true sonship the fruit of "the travail of His soul."

Ver. 30. **But those whom He thus set apart beforehand, He also called**, effectually drew so as truly and freely to choose Christ; **and those whom He** thus **called** to Christ, **He also justified** in Christ, in that great way of propitiation and faith of which the Epistle has so largely spoken; **but** ‡ **those whom He** thus **justified, He also glorified**. "*Glorified*": it is a marvellous past tense. It reminds us that in this passage we are placed, as it were, upon the mountain of the Throne; our finite thought is allowed to speak for once (however little it understands

* Συμμόρφους: μορφὴ is likeness not by accident but of essence. The Greek here is literally, "conformed ones *of* the image, etc."; as if their similitude made them part of that which they resembled.

† Let us banish from the idea of "*predestination*" all thought of a mechanical pagan *destiny*, and use it of the sure purpose of the living and loving God.

‡ Δέ: the "*but*" of logic. He is *proving* the security of the prospect of *glory*.

it) the language of eternity, to utter the facts as the Eternal sees them. To Him, the pilgrim is already in the immortal Country; the bondservant is already at his day's end, receiving His Master's "Well done, good and faithful." He to whom time is not as it is to us thus sees His purposes complete, always and for ever. We see through His sight, in hearing His word about it. So for us, in wonderful paradox, our glorification is presented, as truly as our call, in terms of accomplished fact.

Here, in a certain sense, the long golden chain of *the doctrine* of the Epistle ends—in the hand of the King who thus crowns the sinners whose redemption, faith, acceptance, and holiness, He had, in the Heaven of His own Being, fore-willed and fore-ordered, "before the world began," above all time. What remains of the chapter is the application of the doctrine. But what an application! The Apostle brings his converts out into the open field of trial, and bids them *use* his doctrine *there*. Are they thus dear to the Father in the Son? Is their every need thus met? Is their guilt cancelled in Christ's mighty merit? Is their existence filled with Christ's eternal Spirit? Is sin thus cast beneath their feet, and is such a heaven opened above their heads? "Then what have they to fear," before man, or before God? What power in the universe, of whatever order of being, can really hurt them? For what can separate them from their portion in their glorified Lord, and in His Father's love in Him? Again we listen, with Tertius, as the voice goes on:

Ver. 31. **What therefore shall we say in view of these things? If God is for us, who is against us?** Hε*

* Ὅς γε: the particle deeply *underlines* the pronoun.

**who did not spare His own true** (*ἰδίου*) **Son, but for us all handed Him over** to that awful expiatory, propitiatory, darkness and death, so that He was "pleased to bruise Him, to put Him to grief" (Isai. liii. 10), all for His own great glory, but, no whit the less, all for our pure blessing; **how** (wonderful "*how*"!) **shall He not also with Him,** because *all* is included and involved in Him who is the Father's All, **give us also freely all things** (*τὰ πάντα*, "*the all* things that are")? And do we want to be sure that He will not, after all, find a flaw in our claim, and cast us in His court? **Who will lodge a charge against God's chosen ones?** Will **God—who justifies them?*** **Who will condemn them,** if the charge *is* lodged? Will **Christ—who died, nay rather who rose, who is on the right hand of God, who is actually** (*καὶ*) **interceding for us?** (Observe this one mention in the whole Epistle of His Ascension, and His action for us above, as He is, by the fact of His Session on the Throne, our sure Channel of eternal blessing, unworthy that we are.) Do we need assurance, amidst "the sufferings of this present time," that through them always the invincible hands of Christ clasp us, with untired love? We "look upon the covenant" of our acceptance and life in Him who died for us, and who lives both for and in us, and we meet the fiercest buffet of these waves in peace. **Who shall sunder us from the love of Christ?** There rise before him, as he asks, like so many angry personalities,† the outward woes of the pilgrimage. **Tribulation? or Perplexity? or Persecution? or Famine?**

Ver. 32.

Ver. 33.

Ver. 35.

* Ὁ *δικαιῶν*: we adopt the interrogative rendering of all the clauses here. It is equally good as grammar, and far more congenial to the glowing context.

† Observe the *τίς* of the question, not *τί*.

**or Nakedness? or Peril? or Sword?** As it stands written,

Ver. 36. in that deep song of anguish and faith (Psal. xliv.) in which the elder Church, one with us in deep continuity, tells her story of affliction, "**For Thy sake we are done to death all the day long; we have been reckoned,** estimated, **as sheep of slaughter.**"

Ver. 37. Even so. **But in these things, all of them, we more than conquer;** not only do we tread upon our foes; we spoil them, we find them occasions of glorious

Ver. 38. gain,* **through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life,** life with its natural allurements or its bewildering toils, **nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers,**† whatever Orders of being unfriendly to Christ and His saints the vast Unseen contains, **nor present things, nor things to come,** in all the boundless field of circumstance and contingency, **nor height, nor depth,** in the illimitable sphere of space, **nor any other creature,** no thing, no being, under the Uncreated One, **shall be able to sunder us,** "*us*" with an emphasis upon the word and thought (ἡμᾶς χωρίσαι), **from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord**—from the eternal embrace wherein the Father embosoms the Son, and, in the Son, all who are one with Him.

So once more the divine music rolls itself out into the blessed Name. We have heard the previous cadences as they came in their order; "Jesus our Lord, who was delivered because of our offences, and was raised again because of our justification" (iv. 25); "That grace might reign, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (v. 21); "The gift of God is eternal life, in Jesus Christ our Lord" (vi. 23);

* Cp. 1 Cor. iii. 22: "All things *are yours*, whether life *or death*."

† Strong documentary evidence favours the transference of "*powers*" to a place after "*things to come*." But surely rhythm, and the affinity of words, look the other way.

"I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (vii. 25). Like the theme of a fugue it has sounded on, deep and high; still, always, "our Lord Jesus Christ," who is all things, and in all, and for all, to His happy believing members. And now all is gathered up into this. Our "Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption" (1 Cor. i. 33), the golden burthens of the third chapter, and the sixth, and the eighth, are all, in their living ultimate essence, "Jesus Christ our Lord." He makes every truth, every doctrine of peace and holiness, every sure premiss and indissoluble inference, to be life as well as light. He is pardon, and sanctity, and heaven. Here, finally, the Eternal Love is seen not as it were diffused into infinity, but gathered up wholly and for ever in Him. Therefore to be in Him is to be in It. It is to be within the clasp which surrounds the Beloved of the Father.

Some years ago we remember reading this passage, this close of the eighth chapter, under moving circumstances. On a cloudless January night, late arrived in Rome, we stood in the Coliseum, a party of friends from England. Orion, the giant with the sword, glimmered like a spectre, the spectre of persecution, above the huge precinct; for the full moon, high in the heavens, overpowered the stars. By its light we read from a little Testament these words, written so long ago to be read in that same City; written by the man whose dust now sleeps at Tre Fontane, where the executioner dismissed him to be with Christ; written to men and women some of whom at least, in all human likelihood, suffered in that same Amphitheatre, raised only twenty-two years after Paul wrote to the Romans, and soon made the scene of countless martyrdoms. "Do you want a

relic?" said a Pope to some eager visitor. "Gather dust from the Coliseum; it is all the martyrs."

We recited the words of the Epistle, and gave thanks to Him who had there triumphed in His saints over life and death, over beasts, and men, and demons. Then we thought of the inmost factors in that great victory; Truth and Life. They "knew whom they had believed"—their Sacrifice, their Head, their King. He whom they had believed lived in them, and they in Him, by the Holy Ghost given to them. Then we thought of ourselves, in our circumstances so totally different on the surface, yet carrying the same needs in their depths. Are we too to overcome, in "the things present" of our modern world, and in face of "the things to come" yet upon the earth? Are we to be "more than conquerors," winning blessing out of all things, and really living "in our own generation" (Acts xiii. 36) as the bondmen of Christ and the sons of God? Then for us also the absolute necessities are —the same Truth, and the same Life. And they are ours, thanks be to the Name of our salvation. Time hath no more dominion over them, because death hath no more dominion over Him. For us too Jesus died. In us too, by the Holy Ghost, He lives.

## CHAPTER XX

### *THE SORROWFUL PROBLEM: JEWISH UNBELIEF; DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY*

ROMANS ix. 1-33

WE may well think that again there was silence awhile in that Corinthian chamber, when Tertius had duly inscribed the last words we have studied. A "silence in heaven" follows, in the Apocalypse (viii. 1), the vision of the white hosts of the redeemed, gathered at last, in their eternal jubilation, before the throne and the Lamb. A silence in the soul is the fittest immediate sequel to such a revelation of grace and glory as has passed before us here. And did not the man whose work it was to utter it, and whose personal experience was as it were the informing soul of the whole argument of the Epistle from the first, and not least in this last sacred pæan of faith, keep silence when he had done, hushed and tired by this "exceeding weight" of grace and glory?

But he has a great deal more to say to the Romans, and in due time the pen obeys the voice again. What will the next theme be? It will be a pathetic and significant contrast to the last; a lament, a discussion, an instruction, and then a prophecy, about not himself and his happy fellow-saints, but poor self-blinded unbelieving Israel.

The occurrence of that subject exactly here is true to the inmost nature of the Gospel. The Apostle has just been counting up the wealth of salvation, and claiming it all, as present and eternal property, for himself and his brethren in the Lord. Justifying Righteousness, Liberty from Sin in Christ, the Indwelling Spirit, electing Love, coming and certain Glory, all have been recounted, and asserted, and embraced. *Is it selfish*, this great joy of possession and prospect? Let those say so who see these things only from outside. Make proof of what they are in their interior, enter into them, learn yourself what it is to have peace with God, to receive the Spirit, to expect the eternal glory; and you will find that nothing is so sure to expand the heart towards other men as the personal reception into it of the Truth and Life of God in Christ. It is possible to hold a true creed—and to be spiritually hard and selfish. But is it possible so to be when not only the creed is held, but the Lord of it, its Heart and Life, is received with wonder and great joy? The man whose certainties, whose riches, whose freedom, are all consciously *in Him*, cannot but love his neighbour, and long that he too should come into "the secret of the Lord."

So St Paul, just at this point of the Epistle, turns with a peculiar intensity of grief and yearning towards the Israel which he had once led, and now had left, because they would not come with him to Christ. His natural and his spiritual sympathies all alike go out to this self-afflicting people, so privileged, so divinely loved, and now so blind. Oh that he could offer any sacrifice that would bring them reconciled, humbled, happy, to the feet of the true Christ! Oh that they might see the fallacy of their own way of

salvation, and submit to the way of Christ, taking His yoke, and finding rest to their souls! Why do they not do it? Why does not the light which convinced him shine on them? Why should not the whole Sanhedrin say, "Lord, what wouldst Thou have us to do?" Why does not the fair beauty of the Son of God make them too "count all things but loss" for Him? Why do not the voices of the Prophets prove to them, as they do now to Paul, absolutely convincing of the historical as well as spiritual claims of the Man of Calvary? Has the promise failed? Has God done with the race to which He guaranteed such a perpetuity of blessing? No, that cannot be. He looks again, and he sees in the whole past a long warning that, while an outer circle of benefits might affect the nation, the inner circle, the light and life of God indeed, embraced "a remnant" only; even from the day when Isaac and not Ishmael was made heir of Abraham. And then he ponders the impenetrable mystery of the relation of the Infinite Will to human wills; he remembers how, in a way whose full reasons are unknowable, (but they are good, for they are in God,) the Infinite Will has to do with our willing; genuine and responsible though our willing is. And before that opaque veil he rests. He knows that only righteousness and love is behind it; but he knows that *it is* a veil, and that in front of it man's thought must cease and be silent. Sin is altogether man's fault. But when man turns from sin it is all God's mercy, free, special, distinguishing. Be silent, and trust Him, O man whom He has made. Remember, He *has made* thee. It is not only that He is greater than thou, or stronger; but He has made thee. Be reasonably willing to trust, out of sight, the reasons of thy MAKER.

Then he turns again with new regrets and yearnings to the thought of that wonderful Gospel which was meant for Israel and for the world, but which Israel rejected, and now would fain check on its way to the world. Lastly, he recalls the future, still full of eternal promises for the chosen race, and through them full of blessing for the world; till he rises at length from perplexity and anguish, and the wreck of once eager expectations, into that great Doxology in which he blesses the Eternal Sovereign for the very mystery of His ways, and adores Him because He is His own eternal End.

Ver. 1. **Truth I speak in Christ**, speaking as the member of the All-Truthful; **I do not lie, my conscience, in the Holy Ghost**, informed and governed by Him, **bearing me concurrent witness**—the soul within affirming to itself the word spoken without to others—

Ver. 2. **that I have great grief, and my heart has incessant pain**, yes, the heart in which (v. 5) the Spirit has "poured out" God's love and joy; there is room for both experiences in its human depths.

Ver. 3. **For I was wishing, I myself, to be anathema from Christ**, to be devoted to eternal separation from Him; awful dream of uttermost sacrifice, made impossible only because it would mean self-robbery from the Lord who had bought him; a spiritual suicide by sin—**for**

Ver. 4. **the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen flesh-wise. For they are** (*οἵτινές εἰσιν*) **Israelites**, bearers of the glorious theocratic name, sons of the "Prince with God" (Gen. xxxii. 28); **theirs is the adoption**, the call to be Jehovah's own filial race, "His son, His first-born" (Exod. iv. 22) of the peoples; **and the glory**, the Shechinah of the Eternal Presence, sacramentally seen in Tabernacle and Temple, spiritually spread over the

race ; **and the Covenants**, with Abraham, and Isaac, and Levi, and Moses, and Aaron, and Phinehas, and David ; **and the Legislation**, the holy Moral Code, **and the Ritual**, with its divinely ordered symbolism, that vast Parable of Christ, **and the Promises**, of "the pleasant land," and the perpetual favour, and the coming Lord ;
Ver. 5. **theirs are the Fathers**, patriarchs, and priests, and kings ; **and out of them, as to what is flesh-wise, is the Christ,—He who is over all things, God, blessed to all eternity. Amen.***

It is indeed a splendid roll of honours, recited over this race "separate among the nations," a race which to-day as much as ever remains the enigma of history, to be solved only by Revelation. "*The Jews, your Majesty,*" was the reply of Frederick the Great's old believing courtier, when asked with a smile for the credentials of the Bible ; the short answer silenced the Encyclopædist King. It is indeed a riddle, made of indissoluble facts, this people everywhere dispersed, yet everywhere individual ; scribes of a Book which has profoundly influenced mankind, and which is recognized by the most various races as an august and lawful claimant to be divine, yet themselves, in so many aspects, provincial to the heart ; historians of their own glories, but at least equally of their own unworthiness and disgrace ; transmitters of predictions which may be slighted, but can never, as a whole, be explained away, yet obstinate deniers of the majestic fulfilment in the Lord of Christendom ; human in every fault and imperfection, yet so concerned in bringing to man the message of the Divine that Jesus Himself said of them

* For this rendering, rather than the alternative, "*Blessed for ever be the God who is over all,*" see the reasons offered below, p. 261.

(John iv. 22), "Salvation comes from the Jews." On this wonderful race this its most illustrious member (after his Lord) here fixes his eyes, full of tears. He sees their glories pass before him—and then realizes the spiritual squalor and misery of their rejection of the Christ of God. He groans, and in real agony asks how it can be. One thing only cannot be; the promises have not failed; there has been no failure in the Promiser. What may seem such is rather man's misreading of the promise.

Ver. 6. **But it is not as though the word of God has been thrown out** (ἐκπέπτωκε), that "word" whose divine honour was dearer to him than even that of his people. Ver. 7. **For not all who come from Israel constitute Israel; nor, because they are seed of Abraham, are they all** his **children**, in the sense of family life and rights; **but "In Isaac shall a seed be called thee"** (Gen. xxi. 12); Isaac, and not any son of thy body begotten, is father of those whom thou shalt claim as thy covenant-race. Ver. 8. **That is to say, not the children of his** (τῆς) **flesh are the children of his** (τοῦ) **God; no, the children of the promise**, indicated and limited by its developed terms, **are reckoned as seed.** Ver. 9. **For of the promise this** was **the word** (Gen. xviii. 10, 14), **"According to this time I will come, and Sarah,** she and not *any* spouse of thine; no Hagar, no Keturah, but Sarah, **shall have a son."** And the law of limitations did not stop there, but contracted yet again the stream of even physical filiation: Ver. 10. **Nor only so, but Rebecca too—being with child,** with twin children, **of one husband**—no problem of complex parentage, as with Abraham, occurring here **—even of Isaac our father,** just named as the selected heir—**(for** it was **while they were not yet born, while they**

had not yet shewn any conduct (*πραξάντων τι*) good or bad, that the choice-wise purpose of God might
Ver. 11. remain, sole and sovereign, not based on works, but wholly on the Caller)—it was said to her
Ver. 12. (Gen. xxv. 23), "The greater shall be bondman to the less." As it stands written, in the prophet's message a millennium later, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated,"* I repudiated him as heir.

So the limit has run always along with the promise. Ishmael is Abraham's son, yet not his son. Esau is Isaac's son, yet not his son. And though we trace in Ishmael and in Esau, as they grow, characteristics which may seem to explain the limitation, this will not really do. For the chosen one in each case has his conspicuous unfavourable characteristics too. And the whole tone of the record (not to speak of this its apostolic interpretation) looks towards mystery, not explanation. Esau's "profanity" was the concurrent occasion, not the cause, of the choice of Jacob. The reason of the choice lay in the depths of God, that World "dark with excess of bright." All is well there, but not the less all is unknown.

So we are led up to the shut door of the sanctuary of God's Choice. Touch it; it is adamantine, and it is fast locked. No blind Destiny has turned the key, and lost it. No inaccessible Tyrant sits within, playing to himself both sides of a game of fate, and indifferent to the cry of the soul. The Key-Bearer, whose Name is engraved on the portal, is "He that liveth, and was

* Mal. i. 2, 3.—It is plain that "*hatred*" in such a connexion (and cp. Matt. vi. 24, Luke xiv. 26) need mean no more than relative repudiation. No personal animosity is in question, but a decisive rejection of a rival claim. See Grimm's *N. T. Lexicon* (Thayer), *s.v.* *μισεῖν*.

dead, and is alive for evermore" (Rev. i. 18). And if you listen you will hear words within, like the soft deep voice of many waters, yet of an eternal Heart; "*I am that I am; I will that I will; trust Me.*" But the door *is* locked; and the Voice *is* mystery.

Ah, what agonies have been felt in human souls, as men have looked at that gate, and pondered the unknown interior! The Eternal knows, with infinite kindness and sympathy, the pain unspeakable which can beset the creature when it wrestles with His Eternity, and tries to clasp it with both hands, and to say that "that is all!" We do not find in Scripture, surely, anything like an anathema for that awful sense of the unknown which can gather on the soul drawn—irresistibly as it sometimes seems to be—into the problems of the Choice of God, and oppressed as with "the weight of all the seas upon it," by the very questions stated presently here by the Apostle. The Lord knoweth, not only His will, but our heart, in these matters. And where He entirely declines to explain (surely because we are not yet of age to understand Him if He did) He yet shews us JESUS, and bids us meet the silence of the mystery with the silence of a personal trust in the personal Character revealed in Him.

In something of such stillness shall we approach the paragraph now to follow? Shall we listen, not to explain away, not even over much to explain, but to submit, with a submission which is not a suppressed resentment but an entire reliance? We shall find that the whole matter, in its practical aspect, has a voice articulate enough for the soul which sees Christ, and believes on Him. It says to that soul, "Who maketh thee to differ? Who hath fashioned thee to honour?

Why art thou not now, as once, guiltily rejecting Christ, or, what is the same, postponing Him? Thank HIM who has 'compelled thee,' yet without violation of thyself, 'to come in.' See in thy choice of Him His mercy on thee. And now, fall at His feet, to bless Him, to serve Him, and to trust Him. Think ill of thyself. Think reverently of others. And remember (the Infinite, who has chosen thee, says it), He willeth not the death of a sinner, He loved the world, He bids thee to tell it that He loves it, to tell it that He is Love."

Now we listen. With a look which speaks awe, but not misgiving, disclosing past tempests of doubt, but now a rest of faith, the Apostle dictates again:

Ver. 14. **What therefore shall we say? Is there injustice at God's bar (παρὰ τῷ Θεῷ)? Away with the thought.** The thing is, in the deepest sense, unthinkable. God, the God of Revelation, the God of Christ, is a Being who, if unjust—*ceases to be*, "denies *Himself*." But the thought that His reasons for some given action should be, at least to us now, absolute mystery, He being the Infinite Personality, is not unthinkable at all. And in such a case it is not unreasonable, but the deepest reason, to ask for no more than His articulate guarantee, so to speak, that the mystery is fact; that He is conscious of it, alive to it (speaking humanly); and that He avows it as His will. For when GOD, the God of Christ, bids us "take His will for it," it is a different thing from an attempt, however powerful, to frighten us into silence. It is a reminder WHO He is who speaks; the Being who is kindred to us, who is in relations with us, who loved us, but who also has absolutely made us, and cannot (because we are sheer products of His will) make us so much His equals as to tell us all. So the Apostle proceeds with a "*for*" whose

bearing we have thus already indicated: **For to Moses**
Ver. 15. **he says** (Exod. xxxiv. 19), in the dark sanctuary of Sinai, "**I shall pity whomsoever I do pity, and compassionate whomsoever I do compassionate**"; My account of My saving action shall stop there. **It**
Ver. 16. **appears** (ἄρα) **therefore that it**, the ultimate account of salvation, **is not of** (as the effect is "*of*" the first cause) **the willer, nor of the runner**, the carrier of willing into work, **but of the Pitier**
Ver. 17. **God. For the Scripture** * **says** (Exod. x. 16) **to Pharaoh**, that large example of defiant human sin, real and guilty, but also, concurrently, of the sovereign Choice which sentenced him to go his own way, and used him as a beacon at its end, "**For this very purpose I raised thee up**, made thee stand, even beneath the Plagues, **that I might display in thee My power, and that My Name**, as of the just God who strikes down the proud, **might be told far and wide** (διαγγελῇ) **in all the earth.**"

Pharaoh's was a case of concurrent phenomena. *A man* was there on the one hand, willingly, deliberately, and most guiltily, battling with right, and rightly bringing ruin on his own head, wholly of himself. *God* was there on the other hand, making that man a monument not of grace but of judgment. And that side, that line, is isolated here, and treated as if it were all.

Ver. 18. **It appears then that whom He pleases, He pities, and whom He pleases, He hardens**, in that sense in which He "hardened Pharaoh's heart," "made it stiff" (חזק), "made it heavy" (כבד), "made it harsh" (קשה)—by sentencing it to have its own

* Observe the vital personality of the phrase; "*the Scripture speaks.*" Cp. Gal. iii. 8 for perhaps the strongest example of the kind.

way. Yes,* thus "*it appears.*" And beyond that inference we can take no step of thought but this—that the Subject of that mysterious "*will,*" He who thus "*pleases,*" and "*pities,*" and "*hardens,*" is no other than the God of Jesus Christ. He may be, not only submitted to, but trusted, in that unknowable sovereignty of His will. Yet listen to the question which speaks out the problem of all hearts: **You will say to me therefore, Why does He still,** after such an avowal of His sovereignty, softening this heart, hardening that, why does He still **find fault?** Ah why? **For His act of will who has withstood?** (Nay, you have withstood His will, and so have I. Not one word of the argument has contradicted the primary fact of our will, nor therefore our responsibility. But this he does not bring in here.) Nay rather, rather than take such an attitude of narrow and helpless logic, think deeper; **Nay rather, O man,** O mere human being (*ὦ ἄνθρωπε*), **you—who are you, who are answering back to your** (*τῷ*) **God? Shall the thing formed say to its Former, Why did you make me like this? Has not the potter authority over his** (*τοῦ*) **clay, out of the same kneaded mass to make this vessel for honour but that for dishonour? But if God, being pleased to demonstrate His** (*τὴν*) **wrath, and to evidence what He can do**—*what* will St Paul go on to say? That the Eternal, being thus "pleased," created responsible beings on purpose to destroy them, gave them personality, and then compelled them to transgress? No, he does not say so. The sternly simple illustration, in itself one of the least relieved utterances in the whole Scripture—that dread Potter and his kneaded Clay!—

Ver. 19.

Ver. 20.

Ver. 21.

Ver. 22.

* Cp. Psal. lxxxi. 12, and above, i. 24, 26.

gives way, in its application, to a statement of the work of God on man full of significance in its variation. Here are indeed the "*vessels*" still; and the vessels "*for honour*" are such because of "*mercy*," and His own hand has "*prepared them for glory*." And there are the vessels "*for dishonour*," and in a sense of awful mystery they are such because of "*wrath*." But the "*wrath*" of the Holy One can fall only upon demerit; so these "*vessels*" have merited His displeasure of themselves. And they are "*prepared for ruin*"; but where is any mention of *His* hand preparing them? And meanwhile He "*bears them in much longsuffering*." The mystery is there, impenetrable as ever, when we try to pierce behind "His will." But on every side it is limited and qualified by facts which witness to the compassions of the Infinite Sovereign even in His judgments, and remind us that sin is altogether "of" the creature. So we take up the words where we dropped them above: **What if He bore,** (the tense throws us forward into eternity, to look back thence on His ways in time,) **in much longsuffering, vessels of wrath, adjusted for ruin?** Ver. 23. **And** acted otherwise with others, **that He might evidence the wealth of His glory,** the resources of His inmost Character, poured **upon vessels of pity, which He prepared in advance for glory,** by the processes of justifying and hallowing grace—**whom in fact** (*καὶ*) **He called,** effectually, in their conversion, **even us, not only from the Jews, but also from the Gentiles?** Ver. 24. For while the lineal Israel, with its privilege and its apparent failure, is here first in view, there lies behind it the phenomenon of "the Israel of God," the heaven-born heirs of the Fathers, a race not of blood but of the Spirit. The great Promise, all the while, had set towards *that* Israel

as its final scope; and now he gives proof from the Prophets that this intention was at least half revealed all along the line of revelation.

Ver. 25. As actually (καὶ) in our (τῷ) Hosea (ii. 23, Heb., 25) in the book we know as such, He says, "I will call what was not My people, My people;

Ver. 26. and the not-beloved one, beloved.* And (another Hosean oracle,† in line with the first) it shall be, in the place where it was said to them, Not My people are ye, there they shall be called sons of the living God." In both places the first incidence of the words is on the restoration of the Ten Tribes to covenant blessings. But the Apostle, in the Spirit, sees an ultimate and satisfying reference to a vaster application of the same principle; the bringing of the rebelling and banished ones of all mankind into covenant and blessing.

Meanwhile the Prophets who foretell that great in-gathering indicate with equal solemnity the spiritual failure of all but a fraction of the lineal heirs of promise.

Ver. 27. But Isaiah cries over‡ Israel, "If the number of the sons of Israel should be as the sand of the sea,

Ver. 28. the remnant only shall be saved; for as one who completes and cuts short will the Lord do His work (λόγον, דבר) upon the earth." § Here again is a first and second incidence of the prophecy. In every stage

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* In the Hebrew, literally, "*I will pity the not-pitied one*" (feminine, of the idealized people or church; so in the Greek here, ἠγαπημένην). Divine "*pity*" is more than "akin to" divine "*love*."

† i. 10 (Hebrew, ii. 1).

‡ Ὑπέρ: with the thought of a *lament over* the ruined ones. The preposition appears here in its original and literal meaning.

§ Isa. x. 22, 23: perhaps with an insertion of the phrase, "*the number of*," from Hos. i. 10. As to wording, he quotes freely from the Hebrew, more nearly from the Lxx. But the substance is identical

of the history of Sin and Redemption the Apostle, in the Spirit, sees an embryo of the great Development. So, in the wofully limited numbers of the Exiles who returned from the old captivity he sees an embodied prophecy of the fewness of the sons of Israel who shall return from the exile of incredulity to their true Messiah. **And as Isaiah** (i. 9) **has foretold** (προείρηκεν), so it is; "**Unless the Lord of Hosts** (Σαβαώθ, צבאות) **had left us a seed,* like Sodom we had become, and to Gomorrah we had been resembled.**"

Ver. 29.

Such was the mystery of the facts, alike in the older and in the later story of Israel. A remnant, still a remnant, not the masses, entered upon an inheritance of such ample provision, and so sincerely offered. And behind this lay the insoluble shadow within which is concealed the relation of the Infinite Will to the wills of men. But also, in front of the phenomenon, concealed by no shadow save that which is cast by human sin, the Apostle sees and records the reasons, as they reside in the human will, of this "salvation of a remnant." The promises of God, all along, and supremely now in Christ, had been conditioned (it was in the nature of spiritual things that it should be so) by submission to His way of fulfilment. The golden gift was there, in the most generous of hands, stretched out to give. But it could be put only into a recipient hand open and empty. It could be taken only by submissive and self-forgetting faith. And man, in his fall, had twisted his will out of gear for such an action. Was it wonderful that, by his

as compared with both. Following considerable documentary evidence, we omit here the Greek words represented by "*in righteousness; because a short work.*"

* The equivalent of the Lxx. for the "very small *remnant*" (שְׁרִיד) of the Hebrew.

own fault, he failed to receive? **What therefore shall**
Ver. 30. **we say?*** **Why, that the Gentiles, though they did not** (*τὰ μὴ*) **pursue righteousness,** though no Oracle had set them on the track of a true divine acceptance and salvation, **achieved righteousness,** grasped it when once revealed, **but† the righteousness**
Ver. 31. **that results on faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness,** aiming at what is, for fallen man, the impossible goal, a perfect meeting of the Law's one principle of acceptance, "This do and thou shalt live," **did not attain** that **law‡**; that is to say, practically, as we now review their story of vain efforts in the line of self, did not attain the acceptance to which that law was to be the avenue. The Pharisee as such, the Pharisee Saul of Tarsus for example, neither had peace with God, nor dared to think he had, in the depth of his soul. He knew enough of the divine ideal to be hopelessly uneasy about his realization of it. He could say, stiffly enough, "*God, I thank Thee*" (Luke xviii. 11, 14); but he "went down to his house" unhappy, unsatisfied, unjustified. **On what**
Ver. 32. **account? Because** it was **not of faith, but as of works§**; in the unquiet dream that man must, and could, work up the score of merit to a valid claim. **They stumbled‖ on the Stone of their**
Ver. 33. **(***τοῦ***) stumbling; as it stands written** (Isai. viii. 14, xxviii. 16), in a passage where the great perpetual Promise is in view, and where the blind people are

* For the seventh and last time he uses this characteristic phrase.

† Δέ: in slightly suggested contrast to the ideal of the Jew, a *merited* acceptance.

‡ Omit here the word *δικαιοσύνης*.

§ Omit *τοῦ νόμου*.

‖ Omit *γάρ*.

seen rejecting it as their foothold in favour of policy, or of formalism, **Behold, I place in Sion**, in the very centre of light and privilege, **a Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of upsetting**; and **he who** * **confides in Him**, (or, perhaps, **in it**,) he who rests on it, on Him (ἐπ' αὐτῷ), **shall not be put to shame.**

One great Rabbi at least, Rashi, of the twelfth century, bears witness to the mind of the Jewish Church upon the significance of that mystic Rock. "Behold," so runs his interpretation, "I have established a King, Messiah, who shall be in Zion a stone of proving."

Was ever prophecy more profoundly verified in event? Not for the lineal Israel only, but for Man, the King Messiah is, as ever, the Stone of either stumbling or foundation. He is, as ever, "a Sign spoken against." He is, as ever, the Rock of Ages, where the believing sinner hides, and rests, and builds,

> "Below the storm-mark of the sky,
> Above the flood-mark of the deep."

Have we known what it is to stumble over Him? "We will not have this Man to reign over us"; "We were never in bondage to any man; who is He that He should set us free?" And are we now lifted by a Hand of omnipotent kindness to a place deep in His clefts, safe on His summit, "knowing nothing" for the peace of conscience, the satisfaction of thought, the liberation of the will, the abolition of death, "but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified"? Then let us think with always humbled sympathy of those who, for whatever reason, still "forsake their own mercy" (Jonah ii. 8). And let us inform them where we are, and how we

* Omit πᾶς.

are here, and that "the ground is good." And for ourselves, that we may do this the better, let us often read again the simple, strong assurance which closes this chapter of mysteries; "*He who confides in Him shall not be put to shame*"; "*shall not be disappointed*"; "*shall not*," in the vivid phrase of the Hebrew itself, "*make haste.*" No, we shall not "make haste." From that safe Place no hurried retreat shall ever need to be beaten. That Fortress cannot be stormed; it cannot be surprised; it cannot crumble. For "IT is HE"; the Son, the Lamb, of God; the sinner's everlasting Righteousness, the believer's unfailing Source of peace, of purity, and of power.

## Detached Note to IX. 5.

The following is transcribed, with a few modifications, from the writer's Commentary on the Epistle in *The Cambridge Bible:*

[*"Who is over all, God blessed for ever."*] The Greek may, with more or less facility, be translated (1) as in A.V.; or (2) '**who is God over all,**' etc.; or (3) '**blessed for ever be He who is God over all**' (*i.e.*, the Eternal Father). . . . If we adopt (3) we take the Apostle to be led, by the mention of the Incarnation, to utter a sudden and solemn doxology to the God who gave that crowning mercy. In favour of this it is urged (by some entirely orthodox commentators, as H. A. W. Meyer) that St Paul nowhere else styles the Lord simply 'God,' but rather 'the Son of God,' etc. By this they do not mean to detract from the Lord's Deity; but they maintain that St Paul always so states that Deity, under divine guidance, as to mark the 'Subordination of the Son'—that Subordination which is not a difference of Nature, Power, or Eternity, but of Order; just such as is marked by the simple but profound words Father and Son.

"But on the other hand there is Tit. ii. 13, where the Greek is (at least) *perfectly capable* of the rendering, 'our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.' [There is Acts xx. 28, where the evidence is very strong for the reading, retained by the R.V. (text), '*the Church of God*, which He purchased with His own blood.' And

if St John is to be taken to report words exactly, in his narrative of the Resurrection, in an incident whose point is deeply connected with verbal precision, we have one of the first Apostles, within eight days of the Resurrection, addressing the Risen Lord (John xx. 28) as '*my God*.' (We call attention to this as against the contention that only the latest developments of inspiration, represented in *e.g.* St John's Preamble to his Gospel, shew us Christ called explicitly God.)]

"If . . . it is divinely true that 'the WORD IS GOD,' it is surely far from wonderful if here and there, in peculiar connexions, [St Paul] should so speak of Christ, even though guided to keep another phase of the truth *habitually* in view.

"Now, beyond all fair question, the Greek here is quite naturally rendered as in the A.V.; had it not been for historical controversy, probably, no other rendering would have been suggested. And lastly, and what is important, the context far rather suggests *a lament* (over the fall of Israel) than an ascription of praise. And what is most significant of all, it pointedly suggests *some explicit allusion to the super*-human Nature of Christ, by the words '*according to the flesh*.' But if there is such an allusion, then it must lie in the words, '*over all, God*.'"

It may be interesting to add the following note from Franz Delitzsch (*Brief an die Römer in das Hebräische übersetzt und aus Talmud und Midrasch erläutert*, Leipzig, 1870, p. 89):

"*Christus, nach dem Fleisch, welcher ist Gott über alles, hochgelobet in Ewigkeit.* Deshalb nämlich weil er Gott und Mensch in Einer Person ist. Er ist der andere David (דוד אחר), und ist Jahve unsere Gerechtigkeit

(יהוה צדקנו, Jer. xxiii. 6). Auch der Midrasch *Mischle* zu Spr. xix. 21 zählt ה' צדקנו neben דוד unter den Messiasnamen auf, und auch anderwärts bezeugen Talmud und Midrasch, dass der Messias יהוה heisst; denn 'Gott war in Christo und versöhnte die Welt mit ihm selber.' Paulus sagt in Grunde nichts anderes als was Jesaia ix. 5, wo die Zunz'sche Bibelübersetzung, der exegetischen Wahrheit die Ehre gebend, übersetzt: 'Man nennt seinen Namen: Wunder, Berather, starker Gott, ewiger Vater, Fürst des Friedens.' Der Messias ist und heisst אל גבור und אבי־עד, also obwohl nicht האלהים, doch אלהים (אל) לעולמים."

Delitzsch renders the close of ix. 5 thus:

וְאֲשֶׁר מֵהֶם יָצָא הַמָּשִׁיחַ לְפִי בְשָׂרוֹ אֲשֶׁר חוּא אֵל עַל־הַכֹּל
מְבֹרָךְ לְעוֹלָמִים אָמֵו:

## CHAPTER XXI

### *JEWISH UNBELIEF AND GENTILE FAITH: PROPHECY*

ROMANS X. 1-21

THE problem of Israel is still upon the Apostle's soul. He has explored here and there the conditions of the fact that his brethren, as a mass, have rejected Jesus. He has delivered his heart of its loving human groan over the fact. He has reminded himself, and then his readers, that the fact however involves no failure of the purpose and promise of God; for God from the first had indicated limitations within the apparent scope of the Abrahamic Promise. He has looked in the face, once for all, the mystery of the relation between God's efficient will and the will of the creature, finding a refuge, under the moral strain of that mystery, not away from it but as it were behind it, in the recollection of the infinite trustworthiness, as well as eternal rights, of man's MAKER. Then he has recurred to the underlying main theme of the whole Epistle, the acceptance of the sinner in God's own one way; and we have seen how, from Israel's own point of view, Israel has stumbled and fallen just by his own fault. Israel would not rest upon "the Stone of stumbling"; he would collide with it. Divine sovereignty here or there—the heart of Jewish man, in its responsible personality, and wholly of itself, rebelled

against a man-humbling salvation. And so all its religiousness, its earnestness, its intensity, went for nothing in the quest for peace and purity. They stumbled—a real striking of real wayward feet—at the Stumbling Stone; which all the while lay ready to be their basis and repose.

He cannot leave the subject, with its sadness, its lessons, and its hope. He must say more of his love and longing for Israel; and also more about this aspect of Israel's fall—this collision of man's will with the Lord's Way of Peace. And he will unfold the deep witness of the prophecies to the nature of that Way, and to the reluctance of the Jewish heart to accept it. Moses shall come in with the Law, and Isaiah with the Scriptures of the Prophets; and we shall see how their Inspirer, all along from the first, indicated what should surely happen when a salvation altogether divine should be presented to hearts filled with themselves.

Ver. 1. **Brethren,** he begins, **the deliberate desire** (*εὐδοκία*) **of my heart,** whatever discouragements may oppose it,* **and my petition unto God for them,**† is **salvationwards.** He is inevitably moved to this by the pathetic sight of their earnestness, misguided indeed, guiltily misguided, utterly inadequate to constitute for them even a phantom of merit; yet, to the eyes that watch it, a different thing from indifference or hypocrisy. He cannot see their real struggles, and not long that they may reach the shore.

Ver. 2. **For I bear them witness,** the witness of one who once was the type of the class, **that they have zeal of God,** an honest jealousy for His Name, His

* We thus attempt to convey the force of *μέν*.

† So read; not "*for Israel.*"

Word, His Worship, **only not in the line of spiritual knowledge** (*κατ' ἐπίγνωσιν*). They have not seen all He is, all His Word means, all His worship implies. They are sure, and rightly sure, of many things about Him; but they have not "seen HIM." And so they have not "abhorred themselves" (Job xli. 5, 6). And thus they are *not*, in their own conviction, shut up to a salvation which must be altogether of Him; which is no contract with Him, but eternal bounty from Him.

Solemn and heart-moving scene! There are now, and were then, those who would have surveyed it, and come away with the comfortable reflection that so much earnestness would surely somehow work itself right at last; nay, that it was already sufficiently good in itself to secure these honest zealots a place in some comprehensive heaven. If ever such thoughts had excuse, surely it was here. The "*zeal*" was quite sincere. It was ready to suffer, as well as to strike. The zealot was not afraid of a world in arms. And he felt himself on fire not for evil, but for God, for the God of Abraham, of Moses, of the Prophets, of the Promise. Would not this do? Would not the lamentable rejection of Jesus which attended it be condoned as a tremendous but mere accident, while the "*zeal of God*" remained as the substance, the essence, of the spiritual state of the zealot? Surely a very large allowance would be made; to put it at the lowest terms.

Yet such was not the view of St Paul, himself once the most honest and disinterested Jewish zealot in the world. He had seen THE LORD. And so he had seen himself. The deadly mixture of motive which may underlie what nevertheless we may have to call an *honest* hatred of the Gospel had been shewn to him in the white light of Christ. In that light he had seen—

what it alone can fully shew—the condemnableness of all sin, and the hopelessness of self-salvation. From himself he reasons, and rightly, to his brethren. He knows, with a solemn sympathy, how much they are in earnest. But his sympathy conceals no false liberalism; it is not cheaply generous of the claims of God. He does not think that because they are in earnest they are saved. Their earnestness drives his heart to a deeper prayer for their salvation.

Ver. 3. **For knowing not the righteousness of our (τοῦ) God,** His way of being just, yet the Justifier, **and seeking to set up their own righteousness,** to construct for themselves a claim which should "stand in judgment," **they did not submit to the righteousness of our (τοῦ) God,** when it apppeared before them, embodied in "the Lord our Righteousness." They *aspired* to acceptance. God bade them *submit* to it. In their view, it was a matter of attainment; an ascent to a difficult height, where the climber might exult in his success. As He presented it, it was a matter of surrender, as when a patient, given over, places himself helpless in a master-healer's hands, for a recovery which is to be due to those hands alone, and to be celebrated only to their praise.*

Alas for such "ignorance" in these earnest souls; for such a failure in Israel to strike the true line of "knowledge"! For it was a guilty failure. The Law had been indicating all the while that their Dispensation was not its own end, but one vast complex means to shut man up to a Redeemer who was at once to satisfy

* Cp. 1 Pet. i. 2; *εἰς ὑπακοὴν . . . Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*; an "*obedience*" which means the decisive *submission* of the sinner to the Saviour's *method of mercy.*

every type, and every oracle, and to supply "the impossible of the Law" (viii. 3), by giving Himself to be the believer's vicarious Merit. **For the Law's**
Ver. 4. **end,** its Goal, its Final Cause in the plan of redemption, **is—Christ, unto righteousness,** to effect and secure this wonderful acceptance, **for every one who believes.** Yes, He is no arbitrary sequel to the Law; He stands organically related to it. And to this the Law itself is witness, both by presenting an inexorable and condemning standard as its only possible code of acceptance, and by mysteriously pointing the soul away from that code, in its quest for mercy, to something altogether different, at once accessible and divine. **For**
Ver. 5. **Moses writes down** (*γράφει*) thus **the righteousness** got **from the Law, "The man who does* them, shall live in it"** † (Levit. xviii. 5); it is a matter of personal action and personal meriting alone. Thus the code, feasible and beneficent indeed on the plane of national and social life, which is its lower field of action, is necessarily fatal to fallen man when the question lies between his conscience and the eternal Judge. **But the righteousness** got **from faith,**
Ver. 6. the acceptance received by surrendering trust, **thus speaks** (Deut. xxx. 12-14)—in Moses' words indeed, (and this is one main point in the reasoning, that *he* is witness,) yet as it were with a personal voice of its own, deep and tender; **"Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend to the heaven?" that is, to bring down Christ,** by human efforts, by a climbing merit; **"or, Who**
Ver. 7. **shall descend into the abyss? that is, to bring up**

* Ὁ *ποιήσας*: the aorist sums up acts into a single idea of action.

† Ἐν *αὐτῇ*: "*in the righteousness*"; such seems to be the true reading. To "*live in*" a righteousness is to live as it were surrounded, guaranteed, by it.

**Christ from the dead,**" as if His victorious Sacrifice needed your supplement in order to its resurrection-triumph.

Ver. 8. **But what does it say?** "**Near thee is the utterance,** the explicit account of the Lord's willingness to bless the soul which casts itself on Him,* **in thy mouth,** to recite it, **and in thy heart,**" to welcome it. And **this** message **is the utterance of faith,** the

Ver. 9. creed of acceptance by faith alone, **which we proclaim; that if you shall confess in your mouth Jesus as Lord,**† as divine King and Master, **and shall believe in your heart** that God **raised Him from the dead,** owning in the soul the glory of the Resurrection, as revealing and sealing the triumph of the Atonement,

Ver. 10. **you shall be saved. For with the heart faith is exercised, unto righteousness,** with acceptance for its resultant; **while** (δὲ) **with the mouth confession is made, unto salvation,** with present deliverance and final glory for its resultant, the moral sequel of a life which

Ver. 11. owns its Lord as all in all. **For the Scripture says** (Isai. xxviii. 16), "**Everyone who believes on Him shall not be ashamed,**"‡ shall never be disappointed; shall be "kept, through faith, unto the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. i. 5).

We have traversed here a tract pregnant of questions and mystery. We have to remember here also, as in previous places, that the Scripture is "not a sun, but a lamp." Much, very much, which this passage suggests as problem finds in its words no answer. This citation

* Observe that the context in Deut. xxx. is full of the thought that rebels and law-breakers shall be welcome back when they come penitent to their God, "without one plea," but taking Him at His word.

† Or, with an alternative reading, "*that Jesus is Lord.*"

‡ See above, ix. 33.

from Deuteronomy, with its vision of ascents and descents, its thoughts of the heaven and the abyss, what did it mean when aged Moses spoke it in the plains of Moab? What did it mean *to him?* Did he see, did he feel, Messiah in every clause? Had he conscious foreviews, then and there, of what was to be done ages later beyond that stern ridge of hills, westward of "the narrow stream"? Did he knowingly "testify beforehand" that God was to be born Man at Bethlehem, and to die Man at Jerusalem? We do not know; we cannot possibly know, until the eternal day finds Moses and ourselves together in the City of God, and we better understand the mysterious Word, at last, in that great light. If our Master's utterances are to be taken as final, it is quite certain that "Moses wrote of Him" (John v. 46). But it is not certain that he always knew he was so writing when he so wrote; nor is it certain *how far* his consciousness went when it was most awake that way. In the passage here cited by St Paul the great Prophet may have been aware only of a reference of his words to the seen, the temporal, the national, to the blessings of loyalty to Israel's God-given polity, and of a return to it after times of revolt and decline. But then, St Paul neither affirms this nor denies it. As if on purpose, he almost drops the personality of Moses out of sight, and personifies Justification as the speaker. His concern is less with the Prophet than with his Inspirer, the ultimate Author behind the immediate author. And his own prophet-insight is guided to see that in the thought of *that* Author, as He wielded Moses' mind and diction at His will, CHRIST was the inmost purport of the words.

We may ask again what are the laws by which the Apostle modifies here the Prophet's phrases. "*Who*

*shall descend into the abyss?* The Hebrew reads, "*Who shall go over* (or *on*) *the sea?*" The Septuagint reads, "*Who shall go to the other side of the sea?*" Here too "we know in part." Assuredly the change of terms was neither unconsciously made, nor arbitrarily; and it was made for readers who could challenge it, if so it seemed to them to be done. But we should need to know the whole relation of the One inspiring Master to the minds of both His Prophet and His Apostle to answer the question completely. However, we can see that Prophet and Apostle both have in their thought here the antithesis of depth to height; that the sea is, to Moses here, the antithesis to the sky, not to the land; and that St Paul intensifies the imagery in its true direction accordingly when he writes, "*into the abyss.*"

Again, he finds Justification by Faith in the Prophet's oracle about the subjective "*nearness*" of "*the utterance*" of mercy. Once more we own our ignorance of the conscious purport of the words, as Moses' words. We shall quite decline, if we are reverently cautious, to say that for certain Moses was not aware of such an inmost reference in what he said; it is very much easier to assert than to know what the limitations of the consciousness of the Prophets were. But here also we rest in the fact that behind both Moses and Paul, in their free and mighty personalities, stood their one Lord, building His Scripture slowly into its manifold oneness through them both. He was in the thought and word of Moses; and meantime already to Him the thought and word of Paul was present, and was in His plan. And the earlier utterance had this at least to do with the later, that it drew the mind of the pondering and worshipping Israel to the idea of a contact with God in His Promises which was not external and

mechanical but deep within the individual himself, and manifested in the individual's free and living avowal of it.

As we quit the passage, let us mark and cherish its insistence upon "*confession*," "*confession with the mouth that Jesus is Lord.*" This specially he connects with "*salvation*," with the believer's preservation to eternal glory. "*Faith*" is "*unto righteousness*"; "*confession*" is "*unto salvation.*" Why is this? Is faith after all not enough for our union with the Lord, and for our safety in Him? Must we bring in something else, to be a more or less meritorious makeweight in the scale? If this is what he means, he is gainsaying the whole argument of the Epistle on its main theme. No; it is eternally true that we are justified, that we are accepted, that we are incorporated, that we are kept, through faith only; that is, that Christ is all for all things in our salvation, and our part and work in the matter is to receive and hold Him in *an empty* hand. But then this empty hand, holding Him, receives life and power from Him. The man is vivified by his Rescuer. He is rescued that he may live, and that he may serve as living. He cannot truly serve without loyalty to his Lord. He cannot be truly loyal while he hides his relation to Him. In some articulate way he must "*confess Him*"; or he is not treading the path where the Shepherd walks before the sheep.

The "*confession with the mouth*" here in view is, surely, nothing less than the believer's open loyalty to Christ. It is no mere recitation of even the sacred catholic Creed; which may be recited as by an automaton. It is the witness of the whole man to Christ, as his own discovered Life and Lord. And thus it means in effect the path of faithfulness along which the

Saviour actually leads to glory those who are justified by faith.

That no slackened emphasis on faith is to be felt here is clear from ver. 11. There, in the summary and close of the passage, nothing but faith is named; "whosoever *believeth on Him*." It is as if he would correct even the slightest disquieting surmise that our repose upon the Lord has to be secured by something other than Himself, through some means more complex than taking Him at His word. Here, as much as anywhere in the Epistle, this is the message; "from faith to faith." The "confession with the mouth" is not a different something added to this faith; it is its issue, its manifestation, its embodiment. "I believed; *therefore have I spoken*" (Psal. cxvi. 10).

This recurrence to his great theme gives the Apostle's thought a direction once again towards the truth of the world-wide scope of the Gospel of Acceptance. In the midst of this *philo-judean* section of the Epistle, on his way to say glorious things about abiding mercy and coming blessing for the Jews, he must pause again to assert the equal welcome of "the Greeks" to the Righteousness of God, and the foreshadow of this welcome in the Prophets.

Ver. 12. **For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek** (wonderful antithesis to the "no distinction" of iii. 23!). **For the same Lord is** Lord **of all, wealthy to all who call upon Him,** who invoke Him, who appeal to Him, in the name of His own mercies in His redeeming Son.

Ver. 13. **For** we have the prophecies with us here again. Joel, in a passage (ii. 32) full of Messiah, the passage with which the Spirit of Pentecost filled Peter's lips, speaks thus without a limit; "**Every one, whoever shall call upon the Lord's Name, shall be saved.**" As he cites the words, and the

thought rises upon him of this immense welcome to the sinful world, he feels afresh all the need of the heathen, and all the cruel narrowness of the Pharisaism which would shut them out from such an amplitude of blessing.

Ver. 14. **How then can** * **they call on Him on whom they never** † **believed? But how can they believe** on Him **whom they never heard? But how can they hear** Him **apart from a proclaimer?** Ver. 15. **But how can they proclaim unless they are sent,** unless the Church which holds the sacred light sends her messengers out into the darkness? And in this again the Prophets are with the Christian Apostle, and against the loveless Judaist: **As it stands written** (Isai. lii. 7), "**How fair the feet of the gospellers of peace, of the gospellers of good!**" ‡

Here, as an incident in this profound discussion, is given for ever to the Church of Christ one of the most distinct and stringent of her missionary "marching-orders." Let us recollect this, and lay it on our own souls, forgetting awhile, for we may, the problem of Israel and the exclusiveness of ancient Pharisaism. What is there here for us? What motive facts are here, ready to energize and direct the will of the Christian, and of the Church, in the matter of the "gospelling" of the world?

We take note first of what is written last, the moral beauty and glory of the enterprise. "*How fair the feet!*" From the view-point of heaven there is nothing on the earth more lovely than the bearing of the name of Jesus Christ into the needing world, when the bearer

* Throughout these questions we read the verbs in the conjunctive.

† We thus represent, with hesitation, the aorist tense.

‡ No doubt the immediate reference of Isai. lii. 7 is to good news *for* "Zion" rather than *from* her to the world. But the context is full not only of Messiah but (ver. 15) of "*many nations*."

is one "who loves and knows." The work may have, and probably will have, very little of the rainbow of romance about it. It will often lead the worker into the most uncouth and forbidding circumstances. It will often demand of him the patient expenditure of days and months upon humiliating and circuitous preparations; as he learns a barbarous unwritten tongue, or a tongue ancient and elaborate, in a stifling climate; or finds that he must build his own hut, and dress his own food, if he is to live at all among "the Gentiles." It may lay on him the exquisite—and prosaic—trial of finding the tribes around him entirely unaware of their need of his message; unconscious of sin, of guilt, of holiness, of God. Nay, they may not only not care for his message; they may suspect or deride his motives, and roundly tell him that he is a political spy, or an adventurer come to make his private gains, or a barbarian tired of his own Thule and irresistibly attracted to the region of the sun. He will often be tempted to think "the journey too great for him," and long to let his tired and heavy feet rest for ever. But his Lord is saying of him, all the while, "How fair the feet!" He is doing a work whose inmost conditions even now are full of moral glory, and whose eternal issues, perhaps where he thinks there has been most failure, shall be, by grace, worthy of "the King in His beauty." It is the continuation of what the King Himself "began to do" (Acts i. 1), when He was His own first Missionary to a world which needed Him immeasurably, yet did not know Him when He came.

Then, this paragraph asserts the necessity of the missionary's work still more urgently than its beauty. True, it suggests many questions (what great Scripture does not do so?) which we cannot answer yet at all:—

"Why has He left the Gentiles thus? Why is so much, for their salvation, suspended (in our view) upon the too precarious and too lingering diligence of the Church? What will the King say at last to those who never could, by the Church's fault, even hear the blessed Name, that they might believe in It, and call upon It?" He knoweth *the whole* answer to such questions; not we. Yet here meanwhile stands out this "thing revealed" (Deut. xxix. 29). In the Lord's normal order, which is for certain the order of eternal spiritual right and love, however little we can see all the conditions of the case, man is to be saved through a personal "calling upon His Name." And for that "calling" there is need of personal believing. And for that believing there is need of personal hearing. And in order to that hearing, God does not speak in articulate thunder from the sky, nor send visible angels up and down the earth, but bids His Church, His children, go and tell.

Nothing can be stronger and surer than the practical logic of this passage. The need of the world, it says to us, is not only amelioration, elevation, evolution. It is salvation. It is pardon, acceptance, holiness, and heaven. It is God; it is Christ. And that need is to be met not by subtle expansions of polity and society. No "unconscious cerebration" of the human race will regenerate fallen man. Nor will his awful wound be healed by any drawing on the shadowy resources of a post-mortal hope. The work is to be done now, in the Name of Jesus Christ, and *by* His Name. And His Name, in order to be known, has to be announced and explained. And that work is to be done by those who already know it, or it will not be done at all. "There is none other Name." There is no other method of evangelization.

Why is not that Name already at least externally known and reverenced in every place of human dwelling? It would have been so, for a long time now, if the Church of Christ had followed better the precept and also the example of St Paul. Had the apostolic missions been sustained more adequately throughout Christian history, and had the apostolic Gospel been better maintained in the Church in all the energy of its divine simplicity and fulness, the globe would have been covered—not indeed in a hurry, yet ages ago now—with the knowledge of Jesus Christ as Fact, as Truth, as Life. We are told even now by some of the best informed advocates of missionary enterprise that if Protestant Christendom (to speak of it alone) were really to respond to the missionary call, and "send" its messengers out not by tens but by thousands (no chimerical number), it would be soberly possible within thirty years so to distribute the message that no given inhabited spot should be, at furthest, one day's walk from a centre of evangelization. This programme is not fanaticism, surely. It is a proposal for possible action, too long deferred, in the line of St Paul's precept and example. It is not meant to discredit any present form of well-considered operation. And it does not for a moment ignore the futility of all enterprise where the sovereign power of the Eternal Spirit is not present. Nor does it forget the permanent call to the Church to sustain amply the pastoral work at home, in "the flock of God which is *among us*" (1 Pet. v. 2). But it sees and emphasizes the fact that the Lord has laid it upon His Church to be His messenger to the whole world, and to be in holy earnest about it, and that the work, as to its human side, is quite feasible to a Church awake. "Stir up, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the wills of Thy faithful

people," to both the glory and the necessity of this labour of labours for Thee, "that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of it, may of Thee be plenteously rewarded," in Thy divine use of their obedience, for the salvation of the world.

But the great Missionary anticipates an objection from facts to his burning plea for the rightness of an unrestrained evangelism. The proclamation might be universal; but were not the results partial? "Here a little, and there a little"; was not this the story of missionary results even when a Paul, a Barnabas, a Peter, was the missionary? Everywhere some faith; but everywhere more hostility, and still more indifference! Could this, after all, be the main track of the divine purposes—these often ineffectual excursions of the "fair feet" of the messengers of an eternal peace? Ah, that objection must have offered no mere logical difficulty to St Paul; it must have pierced his heart. For while His Master was his first motive, his fellow-men themselves were his second. He loved their souls; he longed to see them blessed in Christ, saved in Him from "the death that cannot die," filled in Him with "life indeed" (ἡ ὄντως ζωή, 1 Tim. vi. 19). The man who shed tears over his converts as he warned them (Acts xx. 31) had tears also, we may be sure, for those who would not be converted; nay, we know he had: "I tell you, *even weeping* (καὶ κλαίων), that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ" (Phil. iii. 18). But here too he leans back on the solemn comfort, the answer from within a veil,—that Prophecy had taken account of this beforehand. Moses, and Isaiah, and David, had foretold on the one hand a universal message of good, but on the other hand a sorrowfully limited response from man, and notably

from Israel. So he proceeds: **But not all obeyed** * **the good tidings**, when "the word" reached them; **for**—we were prepared for such a mystery, such a grief—**for Isaiah says** (liii. 1), in his great Oracle of the Crucified, "**Lord, who believed our hearing**" (*ἀκοῇ*), the message they heard of us, about One "on whom were laid the iniquities of us all"? And as he dictates that word "*hearing*," it emphasizes to him the fact that not mystic intuitions born out of the depths of man are the means of revelation, but articulate messages given from the depths of God, and spoken by men to men. And he throws the thought into a brief sentence, such as would lie in a footnote in a modern book: **So we gather** (*ἄρα*) **that faith comes from hearing; but the hearing** comes **through Christ's** † **utterance** (*ῥῆμα*); the messenger has it because it was first given to him by the Master who proclaimed HIMSELF the Way, Truth, Life, Light, Bread, Shepherd, Ransom, Lord. All is revelation, not reverie; utterance, not insight.

Ver. 16.

Ver. 17.

Then the swift thought turns, and returns again. The prophecies *have* foretold an evangelical utterance to the whole human world. Not only in explicit prediction do they do so, but in the "mystic glory" of their more remote allusions. **But I say, Did they not hear?** Was this failure of belief due to a limitation of the messenger's range in the plan of God? **Nay, rather, "Unto all the earth went out their tone, and to the ends of man's world** (*ἡ οἰκουμένη*) **their utterances**" (Psal. xix. 4). The words are the voice of that Psalm where

Ver. 18.

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* The aorist gathers up the history of evangelization into a point of thought.

† Read *Χριστοῦ*, probably.

the glories of the visible heavens are collocated with the glories of the Word of God. The Apostle hears more than Nature in the Sunrise Hymn of David; he hears grace and the Gospel in the deep harmony which carries the immortal melody along. The God who meant the skies, with their "silent voices," to preach a Creator not to one race but to all, meant also His Word to have no narrower scope, preaching a Redeemer. Yes, and there were articulate predictions that it should be so, as well as starry parables; predictions too that shewed the prospect not only of a world evangelized, but of an Israel put to shame by the faith of pagans. **But I say** (his rapid phrase meets with an anticipating answer the cavil yet unspoken) **did not Israel know?** Had they no distinct forewarning of what we see to-day? **First comes Moses, saying,*** in his prophetic Song, sung at the foot of Pisgah (Deut. xxxii. 21), "**I**—the '*I*' is emphatic; the Person is THE LORD, and the action shall be nothing less than His—**I will take a no-nation to† move your jealousy; to move your anger I will take a nation non-intelligent**"; a race not only not informed by a previous revelation, but not trained by thought upon it to an insight into new truth. And what Moses indicates, Isaiah, standing later in the history, indignantly explains: **But Isaiah dares anything** (*ἀποτολμᾷ*), **and says** (lxv. 1), "**I was found by those who sought not Me; manifest I became to those who consulted not Me.**"‡ **But as to Israel he says,**

Ver. 19.

Ver. 20.

Ver. 21.

* So we paraphrase *πρῶτος* (not *πρῶτον*) **Μωϋσῆς** *λέγει*.

† So we attempt to give the force of *ἐπ' οὐκ ἔθνει, ἐπὶ ἔθνει*.

‡ *Ἐμὲ* is emphatic in both clauses. *Ἐπερωτᾶν* is used of the consultation of an oracle. Our translation thus seems better than the more secondary explanation, "*who sought not to do My will.*"

in the words next in order in the place (lxv. 2), "**All the day long I spread my hands open,** to beckon and to embrace, **towards a people disobeying and contradicting.**"

So the servant brings his sorrows for consolation to —may we write the words in reverence?—the sorrows of his Master. He mourns over an Athens, an Ephesus, and above all over a Jerusalem, that "will not come to the Son of God, that they might have life" (John v. 40). And his grief is not only inevitable; it is profoundly right, wise, holy. But he need not bear it unrelieved. He grasps the Scripture which tells him that his LORD has called those who would not come, and opened the eternal arms for an embrace—to be met only with a contradiction. He weeps, but it is as on the breast of Jesus as He wept over the City. And in the double certainty that the Lord has felt such grief, and that He is THE LORD, he yields, he rests, he is still. "The King of the Ages" (1 Tim. i. 17) and "the Man of Sorrows" are One. To know Him is to be at peace even under the griefs of the mystery of sin.

## CHAPTER XXII

### *ISRAEL HOWEVER NOT FORSAKEN*

ROMANS xi. 1-10

"*A PEOPLE disobeying and contradicting.*" So the Lord of Israel, through the prophet, had described the nation. Let us remember as we pass on what a large feature in the prophecies, and indeed in the whole Old Testament, such accusations and exposures are. From Moses to Malachi, in histories, and songs, and instructions, we find everywhere this tone of stern truth-telling, this unsparing detection and description of Israelite sin. And we reflect that every one of these utterances, humanly speaking, was the voice of an Israelite; and that whatever reception it met with at the moment—it was sometimes a scornful or angry reception, oftener a reverent one—it was ultimately treasured, venerated, almost worshipped, by the Church of this same rebuked and humiliated Israel. We ask ourselves what this has to say about the true origin of these utterances, and the true nature of the environment into which they fell. Do they not bear witness to the supernatural in both? It was not "human nature" which, in a race quite as prone, at least, as any other, to assert itself, produced these intense and persistent rebukes from within, and secured for them a profound and lasting veneration. The

Hebrew Scriptures, in this as in other things, are a literature which mere man, mere Israelite man, "could not have written if he would, and would not have written if he could."* Somehow, the Prophets not only spoke with an authority more than human, but they were known to speak with it. There was a national consciousness of divine privilege; and it was inextricably bound up with a national conviction that the Lord of the privileges had an eternal right to reprove His privileged ones, and that He had, as a fact, His accredited messengers of reproof, whose voice was not theirs but His; not the mere outcry of patriotic zealots but the Oracle of God. Yea, an awful privilege was involved in the reception of such reproofs: "You only have I known; *therefore* will I punish you" (Amos iii. 2).

But this is a recollection by the way. St Paul, so we saw in our last study, has quoted Isaiah's stern message, only now to stay his troubled heart on the fact that the unbelief of Israel in his day was, if we may dare to put it so, no surprise to the Lord, and therefore no shock to the servant's faith. But is he to stop there, and sit down, and say, "This must be so"? No; there is more to follow, in this discourse on Israel and God. He has "good words, and comfortable words" (Zech. i. 13), after the woes of the last two chapters, and after those earlier passages of the Epistle where the Jew is seen only in his hypocrisy, and rebellion, and pride. He has to speak of a faithful Remnant, now as always present, who make as it were the golden unbroken link

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* I borrow the phrase from the late Prof. H. Rogers' *Supernatural Origin of the Bible inferred from Itself*, a book of masterly thinking and reasoning.

between the nation and the promises. And then he has to lift the curtain, at least a corner of the curtain, from the future, and to indicate how there lies waiting there a mighty blessing for Israel, and through Israel for the world. Even now the mysterious "People" was serving a spiritual purpose in their very unbelief; they were occasioning a vast transition of blessing to the Gentiles, by their own refusal of blessing. And hereafter they were to serve a purpose of still more illustrious mercy. They were yet, in their multitudes, to return to their rejected Christ. And their return was to be used as the means of a crisis of blessing for the world.

We seem to see the look and hear the voice of the Apostle, once the mighty Rabbi, the persecuting patriot, as he begins now to dictate again. His eyes brighten, and his brow clears, and a happier emphasis comes into his utterance, as he sets himself to speak of his people's good, and to remind his Gentile brethren how, in God's plan of redemption, all their blessing, all they know of salvation, all they possess of life eternal, has come to them through Israel. Israel is the Stem, drawing truth and life from the unfathomable soil of the covenant of promise. They are the grafted Branches, rich in every blessing—because they are the mystical seed *of Abraham*, in Christ.

Ver. 1. **I say therefore, Did God ever thrust * away His people? Away with the thought! For I am an Israelite, of Abraham's seed, Benjamin's tribe**; full member of the theocratic race (*Ἰσραηλίτης*), and of its first royal and always loyal tribe; in my own person, therefore, I am an instance of Israel still in covenant.

Ver. 2. **God never * thrust away His people, whom He**

* We attempt to express the aorist thus, with hesitation.

**foreknew** with the foreknowledge of eternal choice and purpose.* That foreknowledge was "not according to their works," or according to their power; and so it holds its sovereign way across and above their long unworthiness. **Or do you not know, in Elijah,** in his story, in the pages marked with his name, **what the Scripture says? How he intercedes before God,** on God's own behalf, **against Israel, saying** (1 Kings xix. 10), "**Lord, Thy prophets they killed, and**
Ver. 3. **Thy altars they dug up; and I was left solitary,**
**and they seek my life"? But what says the**
Ver. 4. **oracular answer** (ὁ χρηματισμὸς) **to him? "I have left for Myself seven thousand men, men who** (οἵτινες) **bowed never knee to Baal"** (1 Kings xix. 18). **So**
**therefore at the present season also there proves**
Ver. 5. **to be** (γέγονεν) **a remnant,** "*a leaving*" (λεῖμμα), left by the Lord for Himself, **on the principle of** (κατὰ) **election of grace;** their persons and their number following a choice and gift whose reasons lie in God alone. And then follows one of those characteristic "foot-notes" of
which we saw an instance above (x. 17): **(But**
Ver. 6. **if by grace, no longer of works;** "*no longer*," in the sense of a logical succession and exclusion; **since the grace proves** (γίνεται), on the other principle, **no longer grace. But if of works, it is no longer grace; since the work is no longer work.**† That is to say, when once the grace-principle is admitted, as it is here assumed to be, "*the work*" of the man who is its subject is "*no longer work*" in the sense which makes

* See above, p. 237.

† This last sentence, "*But if of works, etc.,*" is only doubtfully supported by documents. But it bears, to our mind, strong internal marks of genuineness. It is at once too difficult, and too *deeply* related to the context, to look like the insertion of a scribe.

an antithesis to grace; it is no longer so much toil done in order to so much pay to be given. In other words, the two supposed principles of the divine Choice are in their nature mutually exclusive. Admit the one as the condition of the "election," and the other ceases; you cannot combine them into an amalgam. If the election is of grace, *no* meritorious antecedent to it is possible in the subject of it. If it is according to meritorious antecedent, *no* sovereign freedom is possible in the divine action, such freedom as to bring the saved man, the saved remnant, to an adoring confession of unspeakable and mysterious mercy.

This is the point, here in this passing "foot-note," as in the longer kindred statements above (ch. ix.), of the emphasized allusion to "*choice*" and "*grace*." He writes thus that he may bring the believer, Gentile or Jew, to his knees, in humiliation, wonder, gratitude, and trust. "Why did I, the self-ruined wanderer, the self-hardened rebel, come to the Shepherd who sought me, surrender my sword to the King who reclaimed me? Did I reason myself into harmony with Him? Did I lift myself, hopelessly maimed, into His arms? No; it was the gift of God, *first*, last, and in the midst. And if so, it was the choice of God." That point of light is surrounded by a cloud-world of mystery, though within those surrounding clouds there lurks, as to God, only rightness and love. But the point of light is there, immovable, for all the clouds; where fallen man chooses God, it is thanks to God who has chosen fallen man. Where a race is not "*thrust away*," it is because "*God foreknew*." Where some thousands of members of that race, while others fall away, are found faithful to God, it is because He has "*left them for Himself, on the principle of choice of grace*." Where, amidst a wide-

spread rejection of God's Son Incarnate, a Saul of Tarsus, an Aquila, a Barnabas, behold in Him their Redeemer, their King, their Life, their All, it is on that same principle. Let the man thus beholding and believing give *the whole* thanks for his salvation in the quarter where it is all due. Let him not confuse one truth by another. Let not this truth disturb for a moment his certainty of personal moral freedom, and of its responsibility. Let it not for a moment turn him into a fatalist. But let him abase himself, and give thanks, and humbly trust Him who has thus laid hold of him for blessing. As he does so, in simplicity, not speculating but worshipping, he will need no subtle logic to assure him that he is to pray, and to work, without reserve, for the salvation of all men. It will be more than enough for him that His SOVEREIGN bids him do it, and tells him that it is according to His heart.

To return a little on our steps, in the matter of the Apostle's doctrine of the divine Choice: the reference in this paragraph to the seven thousand faithful in Elijah's day suggests a special reflection. To us, it seems to say distinctly that the "election" intended all along by St. Paul cannot possibly be explained adequately by making it either an election (to whatever benefits) of mere masses of men, as for instance of a nation, considered apart from its individuals; or an election merely to privilege, to opportunity, which may or may not be used by the receiver. As regards national election, it is undoubtedly present and even prominent in the passage, and in this whole section of the Epistle. For ourselves, we incline to see it quite simply in ver. 2 above; "*His people, whom He foreknew.*" We read there, what we find so often in the Old Testament, a sovereign choice of a nation to

stand in special relation to God ; of a nation taken, so to speak, in the abstract, viewed not as the mere total of so many individuals, but as a quasi-personality. But we maintain that the idea of election takes another line when we come to the "*seven thousand.*" Here we are thrown at once on the thought of individual experiences, and the ultimate secret of them, found only in the divine Will affecting the individual. The "seven thousand" had no aggregate life, so to speak. They formed, *as* the seven thousand, no organism or quasi-personality. They were "*left*" not as a mass, but as units ; so isolated, so little grouped together, that even Elijah did not know of their existence. They were just so many individual men, each one of whom found power, by faith, to stand personally firm against the Baalism of that dark time, with the same individual faith which in later days, against other terrors, and other solicitations, upheld a Polycarp, an Athanasius, a Huss, a Luther, a Tyndale, a De Seso, a St Cyran. And the Apostle quotes them as an instance and illustration of the Lord's way and will with the believing of all time. In their case, then, he both passes as it were through national election to individual election, as a permanent spiritual mystery ; and he shews that he means by this an election not only to opportunity but to holiness. The Lord's "*leaving them for Himself*" lay behind their not bowing their knees to Baal. Each resolute confessor was individually enabled, by a sovereign and special grace. He was a true human personality, freely acting, freely choosing not to yield in that terrible storm. But behind his freedom was the higher freedom of the Will of God, saving him from himself that he might be free to confess and suffer. To our mind, no part of the Epistle more clearly than this passage

affirms this individual aspect of the great mystery. Ah, it is a mystery indeed; we have owned this at every step. And it is never for a moment to be treated therefore as if we knew all about it. And it is never therefore to be used to confuse the believer's thought about other sides of truth. But it is there, as a truth among truths; to be received with abasement by the creature before the Creator, and with humble hope by the simple believer.

He goes on with his argument, taking up the thread broken by the "foot-note" upon grace and works:

Ver. 7. **What therefore? What Israel,** the nation, the character, **seeks after,** righteousness in the court of God, **this it lighted not upon** (*οὐκ ἐπέτυχεν*),* as one who seeks a buried treasure in the wrong field "lights not upon" it; **but the election,** the chosen ones, the "seven thousand" of the Gospel era, **did light upon it.**

Ver. 8. **But the rest were hardened,** (not as if God had created their hardness, or injected it; but He gave it to be its own penalty;) **as it stands written** (Isai. xxix. 10, and Deut. xxix. 4 †), "**God gave them a spirit of slumber, eyes not to see, and ears not to hear, even to this day.**" A persistent ("*unto this day*") unbelief was the sin of Israel in the Prophets' times, and it was the same in those of the Apostles. And the condition was the same; God "gave" sin to be its own way of retribution.

Ver. 9. **And David says** (Psal. lxix. 22), in a Psalm full of Messiah, and of the awful retribution justly ordained to come on His im-

* The aorists *sum up* the manifold history.

† Such a combination of citations is a significant witness to the Apostle's view of the O. T. as, from its divine side, *one Book* everywhere.

penitent enemies, "**Let their table turn into a trap, and**
Ver. 10. **into toils** (*θήρα*), **and into a stumbling-block, and into a requital to them; darkened be their eyes, not to see, and their back ever bow Thou together.**"

The words are awful, in their connexion here, and in themselves, and as a specimen of a class. Their purpose here is to enforce the thought that there is such a thing as positive divine action in the self-ruin of the impenitent; a *fiat* from the throne which "gives" a coma to the soul, and beclouds its eyes, and turns its blessings into a curse. Not one word implies the thought that He who so acts meets a soul tending upwards and turns it downward; that He ignores or rejects even the faintest enquiry after Himself; that He is Author of one particle of the sin of man. But we do learn that the adversaries of God and Christ may be, and, where the Eternal so sees it good, are, *sentenced* to go their own way, even to its issues in destruction. The context of every citation here, as it stands in the Old Testament, shews abundantly that those so sentenced are no helpless victims of an adverse fate, but sinners of their own will, in a sense most definite and personal. Only, a sentence of judgment is concerned also in the case; "*Fill ye up then the measure*" (Matt. xxiii. 32).

But then also in themselves, and as a specimen of a class, the words are a dark shadow in the Scripture sky. It is only by the way that we can note this here, but it must not be quite omitted in our study. This sixty-ninth Psalm is a leading instance of the several Psalms where the Prophet appears calling for the sternest retribution on his enemies. What thoughtful heart has not felt the painful mystery so presented? Read in the hush of secret devotion, or sung perhaps to some majestic chant beneath the minster-roof, they still tend

to affront the soul with the question, Can this possibly be after the mind of Christ? And there rises before us the form of One who is in the act of Crucifixion, and who just then articulates the prayer, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Can these "imprecations" have His sanction? Can He pass them, endorse them, as His Word?

The question is full of pressing pain. And no answer can be given, surely, which shall relieve all that pain; certainly nothing which shall turn the clouds of such passages into rays of the sun. They *are* clouds; but let us be sure that they belong to the cloud-land which gathers *round the Throne*, and which only conceals, not wrecks, its luminous and immovable righteousness and love. Let us remark, for one point, that this same dark Psalm is, by the witness of the Apostles, as taught by their Master, a Psalm full of Messiah. It was undoubtedly claimed as His own mystic utterance by THE LAMB of the Passion. He speaks in these dread words who also says, in the same utterance (ver. 9), "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up." So the Lord Jesus did endorse this Psalm. He more than endorsed it; He adopted it as His own. Let this remind us further that the utterer of these denunciations, even the first and non-mystical utterer,—David, let us say,—appears in the Psalm not merely as a private person crying out about his violated personal rights, but as an ally and vassal of God, one whose life and cause is identified with His. Just in proportion as this is so, the violation of his life and peace, by enemies described as quite consciously and deliberately malicious, is a violation of the whole sanctuary of divine righteousness. If so, is it incredible that even the darkest words of such a Psalm are to be read as a true echo from the depths of

man to the Voice which announces "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to every soul of man that doeth evil"? Perhaps even the most watchful assertor of the divine character of Scripture is not bound to assert that no human frailty in the least moved the spirit of a David when he, in the sphere of his own personality, thought and said these things But we have no right to assert, as a known or necessary thing, that it was so. And we have right to say that in themselves these utterances are but a sternly true response to the avenging indignation of the Holy One.

In any case, do not let us talk with a loose facility about their incompatibility with "the spirit of the New Testament." From one side, the New Testament is an even sterner Book than the Old; as it must be of course, when it brings sin and holiness "out into the light" of the Cross of Christ. It is in the New Testament that, "the souls" of saints at rest are heard saying (Rev. vi. 10), "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" It is in the New Testament that an Apostle writes (2 Thess. i. 6), "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them which trouble you." It is the Lord of the New Testament, the Offerer of the Prayer of the Cross, who said (Matt. xxiii. 32-35) "Fill ye up the measure of your fathers. I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes, and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth."

His eyes must have rested, often and again, upon the denunciations of the Psalms. He saw in them that which struck no real discord, in the ultimate spiritual depth, with His own blessed compassions. Let us not

resent what He has countersigned. It is His, not ours, to know all the conditions of those mysterious outbursts from the Psalmists' consciousness. It is ours to recognize in them the intensest expression of what rebellious evil merits, and will find, as its reward.

But we have digressed from what is the proper matter before us. Here, in the Epistle, the sixty-ninth Psalm is cited only to affirm with the authority of Scripture the mystery of God's action in sentencing the impenitent adversaries of His Christ to more blindness and more ruin. Through this dark and narrow door the Apostle is about to lead us now into "a large room" of hope and blessing, and to unveil to us a wonderful future for the now disgraced and seemingly rejected Israel.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### *ISRAEL'S FALL OVERRULED, FOR THE WORLD'S BLESSING, AND FOR ISRAEL'S MERCY*

ROMANS xi. 11-24

THE Apostle has been led a few steps backwards in the last previous verses. His face has been turned once more toward the dark region of the prophetic sky, to see how the sin of Christ-rejecting souls is met and punished by the dreadful "*gift*" of slumber, and apathy, and the transmutation of blessings to snares. But now, decisively, he looks sunward. He points our eyes, with his own, to the morning light of grace and promise. We are to see what Israel's fall has had to do with the world's hope and with life in Christ, and then what blessings await Israel himself, and again the world through him.

Ver. 11. **I say, therefore,** (the phrase resumes the point of view to which the same words above (ver. 1) led us,) **did they stumble that they might fall?** Did their national rejection of an unwelcome because unworldly Messiah take place, in the divine permission, with the positive divine purpose that it should bring on a final rejection of the nation, its banishment out of its place in the history of redemption? **Away with the thought! But their partial fall* is the occasion of God's**

* Παράπτωμα: so we venture to render the word here, where its compound form gets a special point from its neighbourhood to the simple verb πίπτειν (πέσωσι).

**salvation** (ἡ σωτηρία) **for the Gentiles, with a view to move them,** the Jews, **to jealousy,** to awake them to a sight of what Christ is, and of what their privilege in Him might yet be, by the sight of His work and glory in once pagan lives.

Observe here the divine benignity which lurks even under the edges of the cloud of judgment. And observe too, thus close to the passage which has put before us the mysterious side of divine action on human wills, the daylight simplicity of *this* side of that action; the loving skill with which the world's blessing is meant by the God of grace to act, exactly in the line of human feeling, upon the will of Israel.

But would that "the Gentiles" had borne more in heart that last short sentence of St Paul's, through these long centuries since the Apostles fell asleep! It is one of the most marked, as it is one of the saddest, phenomena in the history of the Church that for ages, almost from the days of St John himself, we look in vain either for any appreciable Jewish element in Christendom, or for any extended effort on the part of Christendom to win Jewish hearts to Christ by a wise and loving evangelization. With only relatively insignificant exceptions this was the abiding state of things till well within the eighteenth century, when the German Pietists began to call the attention of believing Christians to the spiritual needs and prophetic hopes of Israel, and to remind them that the Jews were not only a beacon of judgment, or only the most impressive and awful illustration of the fulfilment of prophecy, but the bearers of yet unfulfilled predictions of mercy for themselves and for the world. Meanwhile, all through the Middle Age, and through generations of preceding and following time also, Christendom did little for Israel

but retaliate, reproach, and tyrannize. It was so of old in England; witness the fires of York. It is so to this day in Russia, and where the *Judenhetze* inflames innumerable hearts in Central Europe.

No doubt there is more than one side to the persistent phenomenon. There is a side of mystery; the permissive sentence of the Eternal has to do with the long affliction, however caused, of the people which once uttered the fatal cry, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matt. xxvii. 25). And the wrong-doings of Jews, beyond a doubt, have often made a dark occasion for a "Jew-hatred," on a larger or narrower scale. But all this leaves unaltered, from the point of view of the Gospel, the sin of Christendom in its tremendous failure to seek, in love, the good of erring Israel. It leaves as black as ever the guilt of every fierce retaliation upon Jews by so-called Christians, of every slanderous belief about Jewish creed or life, of every unjust anti-Jewish law ever passed by Christian king or senate. It leaves an undiminished responsibility upon the Church of Christ, not only for the flagrant wrong of having too often animated and directed the civil power in its oppressions of Israel, and not only for having so awfully neglected to seek the evangelization of Israel by direct appeals for the true Messiah, and by an open setting forth of His glory, but for the deeper and more subtle wrong, persistently inflicted from age to age, in a most guilty unconsciousness—the wrong of having failed to manifest Christ to Israel through the living holiness of Christendom. Here, surely, is the very point of the Apostle's thought in the sentence before us: "*Salvation to the Gentiles, to move the Jews to jealousy.*" In his inspired idea, Gentile Christendom, in Christ, was to be so pure, so beneficent, so happy, finding manifestly in

its Messianic Lord such resources for both peace of conscience and a life of noble love, love above all directed towards opponents and traducers, that Israel, looking on, with eyes however purblind with prejudice, should soon see a moral glory in the Church's face impossible to be hid, and be drawn as by a moral magnet to the Church's hope. Is it the fault of God (may He pardon the formal question, if it lacks reverence), or the fault of man, man carrying the Christian name, that facts have been so wofully otherwise in the course of history? It is the fault, the grievous fault, of us Christians. The narrow prejudice, the iniquitous law, the rigid application of exaggerated ecclesiastical principle, all these things have been man's perversion of the divine idea, to be confessed and deplored in a deep and interminable repentance. May the mercy of God awaken Gentile Christendom, in a manner and degree as yet unknown, to remember this our indefeasible debt to this people everywhere present with us, everywhere distinct from us;—the debt of *a life*, personal and ecclesiastical, so manifestly pure and loving in our Lord the Christ as to "move them to the jealousy" which shall claim Him again for their own. Then we shall indeed be hastening the day of full and final blessing, both for themselves and for the world.

To that bright coming day the Apostle points us now, more directly than ever: **But if their partial fall*** **be the world's wealth, and their lessening** (ἥττημα), their reduction, (a reduction in one aspect to a race of scattered exiles, in another to a mere remnant of "Israelites indeed,") **be the Gentiles' wealth**, the occasion by which "the unsearchable wealth of Messiah"

Ver. 12.

* Παράπτωμα: see above p. 294.

(Eph. iii. 8) has been as it were forced into Gentile receptacles, **how much more their fulness**, the filling of the dry channel with its ample ideal stream, the change from a believing remnant, fragments of a fragmentary people, to a believing nation, reanimated and reunited? What blessings for "the world," for "the Gentiles," may not come through the vehicle of such an Israel?

Ver. 13. **But* to you I speak, the Gentiles†**; to you, because if I reach the Jews, in the way I mean, it must be through you. **So far indeed as I, distinctively I** (ἐγώ), **am the Gentiles' Apostle, I glorify my ministry** as such; I rejoice, Pharisee that I once was, to be devoted as no other Apostle is to a ministry for those whom I once thought of as of outcasts in religion. But I speak as your own Apostle, and to you,

Ver. 14. **if perchance I may move the jealousy of my flesh and blood,‡ and may save some from amongst them**, by letting them as it were overhear what are the blessings of you Gentile Christians, and how it is the Lord's purpose to use those blessings as a magnet to wandering Israel.§ His hope is that, through the Roman congregation, this glorious open secret will come out, as they meet their Jewish neigh-

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* Read δὲ not γάρ. It is the "*but*" of a slight pause and resumption.

† The converts of the Roman Mission were surely Gentiles for the most part. See further below, ver. 25.

‡ Τὴν σάρκα μου: we venture to write "*flesh and blood*" as the nearest equivalent in our parlance to the vigorous Greek, "*my flesh*."

§ It will be seen that we punctuate the Greek here as follows: Ὑμῖν δὲ λέγω τοῖς ἔθνεσιν (ἐφ' ὅσον μὲν οὖν εἰμὶ ἐγὼ ἐθνῶν ἀπόστολος, τὴν διακονίαν μου δοξάζω) εἴ πως κτλ. The thought of his "*glory*" in his "*ministry*" is surely *parenthetical*; thrown in to remind them that his plea for Israel means no change of heart towards his Gentile converts, or any wavering in the certainty that in Christ they are as completely "the people of God" as Israel is. The "main line" of the sentence runs past this parenthesis: "To you Gentiles I speak, in the hope of moving the jealousy of the Jews."

bours and talk with them. So would one here, another there, "in the streets and lanes of the City," be drawn to the feet of Jesus, under the constraint of that "jealousy" which means little else than the human longing to understand what is evidently the great joy of another's heart; a "jealousy" on which often grace can fall, and use it as the vehicle of divine light and life.

He says only, "*some of them*"; as he does in the sister Epistle; 1 Cor. ix. 22.* He recognizes it as his present task, indicated alike by circumstance and revelation, to be not the glad ingatherer of vast multitudes to Christ, but the patient winner of scattered sheep. Yet let us observe that none the less he spends his whole soul upon that winning, and takes no excuse from a glorious future to slacken a single effort in the difficult present.

Ver. 15. **For if the throwing away of them**, their downfall as the Church of God, was **the world's reconciliation**, the instrumental or occasioning cause of the direct proclamation to the pagan peoples of the Atonement of the Cross, **what** will **their reception be, but life from the dead?** That is to say, the great event of Israel's return to God in Christ, and His to Israel, will be the signal and the means of a vast rise of spiritual life in the Universal Church, and of an unexampled ingathering of regenerate souls from the world. When Israel, as a Church, fell, the fall worked good for the world merely by driving, as it were, the apostolic preachers out from the Synagogue, to which they so much longed to cling. The Jews did anything but aid the work. Yet even so they were made an occasion for world-wide good. When they are

* Cp. too 2 Cor. xi. 14-16 with this whole passage.

"received again," as this Scripture so definitely affirms that they shall be received, the case will be grandly different. As before, they will be "occasions." A national and ecclesiastical return of Israel to Christ will of course give occasion over the whole world for a vastly quickened attention to Christianity, and for an appeal for the world's faith in the facts and claims of Christianity, as bold and loud as that of Pentecost. But more than this; Israel will now be not only occasion but agent. The Jews, ubiquitous, cosmopolitan, yet invincibly national, coming back in living loyalty to the Son of David, the Son of God, will be a positive power in evangelization such as the Church has never yet felt. Whatever the actual facts shall prove to be in the matter of their return to the Land of Promise* (and who can watch without deep reflection the nation-less land and the land-less nation?) no prediction obliges us to think that the Jews will be withdrawn from the wide world by a national resettlement in their Land. A nation is not a Dispersion merely because it has individual citizens widely dispersed; if it has a true national centre, it is a people at home, a people with a home. Whether as a central mass in Syria, or as also a presence everywhere in the human world, Israel will thus be ready, once restored to God in Christ, to be a more than natural evangelizing power.

Let this be remembered in every enterprise for the spiritual good of the great Dispersion now. Through such efforts God is already approaching His hour of blessing, long expected. Let that fact animate and give a glad patience to His workers, on whose work He surely begins in our day to cast His smile of growing blessing.

* This chapter is silent on that great matter.

Now the argument takes a new direction. The restoration thus indicated, thus foretold, is not only sure to be infinitely beneficial. It is also to be looked for and expected as a thing lying so to speak in the line of spiritual fitness, true to the order of God's plan. In His will, when He went about to create and develop His Church, Israel sprung from the dry ground as the sacred Olive, rich with the sap of truth and grace, full of branch and leaf. From the tents of Abraham onward, the world's true spiritual light and life was there. There, not elsewhere, was revelation, and God-given ordinance, and "the covenants, and the glory." There, not elsewhere, the Christ of God, for whom all things waited, towards whom all the lines of man's life and history converged, was to appear. Thus, in a certain profound sense, all true salvation must be not only "of" Israel (John iv. 24) but through him. Union with Christ was union with Abraham. To become a Christian, that is to say, one of Messiah's men, was to become, mystically, an Israelite. From this point of view the Gentile's union with the Saviour, though not in the least less genuine and divine than the Jew's, was, so to speak, less normal. And thus nothing could be more spiritually normal than the Jew's recovery to his old relation to God, from which he had violently dislocated himself. These thoughts the Apostle now presses on the Romans, as a new motive and guide to their hopes, prayers, and work. (Do we gather from the length and fulness of the argument that already it was difficult to bring Gentiles to think aright of the chosen people in their fall and rebellion?) He reminds them of the inalienable consecration of Israel to special divine purposes. He points them to the ancient Olive, and boldly tells them that they are, themselves, only a graft of a wild stock,

inserted into the noble tree. Not that he thinks of the Jew as a superior being. But the Church of Israel was the original of the Church. So the restoration of Israel to Christ, and to the Church, is a recovery of normal life, not a first and abnormal grant of life.

Ver. 16. **But if the first-fruit was holy, holy is the kneaded lump too.** Abraham was as it were the Lord's First-fruits of mankind, in the field of His Church. "Abraham's seed" are as it were the mass kneaded from that first-fruits; made of it. Was the first-fruits holy, in the sense of consecration to God's redeeming purpose? Then that which is made of it must somehow still be a consecrated thing, even though put aside as if "common" for awhile. **And if the root** was **holy**, holy are **the branches too**; the lineal heirs of Abraham are still, ideally, potentially, consecrated to Him who separated Abraham to Himself, and moved him to his great self-separation. Ver. 17. **But if some of the branches** (how tender is the euphemism of the "*some*"!) **were broken off, while you, wild-olive as you were, were grafted in among them,** in their place of life and growth, **and became a sharer of the root and of the Olive's fatness,—do not boast over the** torn-off branches. Ver. 18. **But if you do boast over them—not you carry the root, but the root carries you.** Ver. 19. **You will say then, The branches were broken off—that I might be grafted in. Good:** true—and untrue: **because of their unbelief they were broken off, while you because of your faith stand.** They were no better beings than you, in themselves. But neither are you better than they, in yourself. They and you alike are, personally, mere subjects of redeeming mercy; owing all to Christ; possessing all only as accepting

Christ. "Where is your boasting, then?" **Do not be**
Ver. 21. **high-minded, but fear,** fear yourself, your sin, your enemy. **For if God did not spare the natural branches, take care lest He spare not you either.**
Ver. 22. **See therefore God's goodness and sternness. On those who fell,** came His **sternness** (*ἀποτομία*, not *ἀποτομίαν*); **but on you,** His **goodness, if you abide by that** (*τῇ*) **goodness,** with the adherence and response of faith; **since you too will be cut out** otherwise. **And**
Ver. 23. **they too, if they do not abide by their** (*τῇ*) **unbelief, shall be grafted in; for God is able**
Ver. 24. **to graft them in again. For if you from the naturally wild olive were cut out, and non-naturally** (*παρὰ φύσιν*) **were grafted into the Garden-Olive, how much more shall those,** the branches **naturally, be grafted into their own Olive!**

Here are more topics than one which call for reverent notice and study.

1. The imagery of the Olive, with its root, stem, and branches. The Olive, rich and useful, long-lived, and evergreen, stands, as a "nature-parable" of spiritual life, beside the Vine, the Palm, and the Cedar, in the Garden of God. Sometimes it pictures the individual saint, living and fruitful in union with his Lord (Psal. lii. 8). Sometimes it sets before us the fertile organism of the Church, as here, where the Olive is the great Church Universal in its long life before and after the historical coming of Christ; the life which in a certain sense began with the Call of Abraham, and was only magnificently developed by the Incarnation and Passion. Its Root, in this respect, is the great Father of Faith. Its Stem is the Church of the Old Testament, which coincided, in the matter of external privilege, with the nation of Israel, and to which at least the immense majority of

true believers in the elder time belonged. Its Branches (by a slight and easy modification of the image) are its individual members, whether Jewish or Gentile. The Master of the Tree, arriving on the scene in the Gospel age, comes as it were to prune His Olive, and to graft. The Jewish "branch," if he is what he seems, if he believes indeed and not only by hypothesis, abides in the Tree. Otherwise, he is—from the divine point of view—broken off. The Gentile, believing, is grafted in, and becomes a true part of the living organism; as genuinely and vitally one with Abraham in life and blessing as his Hebrew brother. But the fact of the Hebrew "race" in root and stem rules still so far as to make the re-ingrafting of a Hebrew branch, repenting, more "natural" (not more possible, or more beneficial, but more "natural") than the first ingrafting of a Gentile branch. The whole Tree is for ever Abrahamic, Israelite, in stock and growth; though all mankind has place now in its forest of branches.

2. The imagery of Grafting. Here is an instance of partial, while truthful, use of a natural process in Scripture parable. In our gardens and orchards it is the wild stock which receives, in grafting, the "good" branch; a fact which lends itself to many fertile illustrations. Here, on the contrary, the "wild" branch is inserted into the "good" stock. But the olive-yard yields to the Apostle all the imagery he really needs. He has before him, ready to hand, the Tree of the Church; all that he wants is an illustration of communication and union of life by artificial insertion. And this he finds in the olive-dresser's art, which shews him how a vegetable fragment, apart and alien, can by human design be made to grow into the life of the tree, as if a native of the root.

3. The teaching of the passage as to the Place of Israel in the divine Plan of life for the world. We have remarked on this already, but it calls for reiterated notice and recollection. "At sundry times, and in divers manners," and through many and divers races and civilizations, God has dealt with man, and is dealing with him, in the training and development of his life and nature. But in the matter of man's spiritual salvation, in the gift to him, in his Fall, of the life eternal, God has dealt with man, practically, through *one* race, Israel. Let it never be forgotten that the "sundry times and divers manners" of the apostolic Epistle (Heb. i. 1) are all referred to "the prophets"; they are the "times" and "manners" of the Old Testament revelation. And when at length the same Eternal Voice spoke to man "*in the Son*" (ἐν Υἱῷ), that Son came of Israel, "took hold of Abraham's seed" (Heb. ii. 16), and Himself bore definite witness that "salvation is from the Jews" (John iv. 24). Amidst the unknown manifoldness of the work of God for man, and in man, this is single and simple —that in one racial line only runs the stream of authentic and supernatural revelation; in the line of this mysteriously chosen Israel. From this point of view, the great Husbandman has planted not a forest but a Tree; and the innumerable trees of the forest can get the sap of Eden only as their branches are grafted by His hand into His one Tree, by the faith which unites them to Him who is the Root below the root, "the Root of David," and of Abraham.

4. The appeal to the new-grafted "branch" to "abide by the goodness of God." We have listened, as St Paul has dictated to his scribe, to many a deep word about a divine and sovereign power on man;

about man's absolute debt to God for the fact that he believes and lives. Yet here, with equal decision, we have man thrown back on the thought of his responsibility, of the contingency in a certain sense of his safety on his fidelity.* "If you are true to mercy, mercy will be true to you; otherwise you too will be broken off." Here, as in our study of earlier passages, let us be willing to go all along with Scripture in the seeming inconsistency of its absolute promises and its contingent cautions. Let us, like it, "go to both extremes"; then we shall be as near, probably, as our finite thought can be at present to the whole truth as it moves, a perfect sphere, in God. Is the Christian worn and wearied with his experience of his own pollution, instability, and helplessness? Let him embrace, without a misgiving, the whole of that promise, "My sheep shall never perish." Has he drifted into a vain confidence, not in Christ, but in privilege, in experience, in apparent religious prosperity? Has he caught himself in the act of saying, even in a whisper, "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are"? Then let him listen in time to the warning voice, "Be not high-minded, but fear"; "Take heed lest He spare not thee." And let him put no pillow of theory between the sharpness of that warning and his soul. Penitent, self-despairing, resting in Christ alone, let him "*abide by the goodness of God.*"

* "To our safety our sedulity is required." Hooker, *Sermon on the Perpetuity of Faith in the Elect* (at the close of the sermon). See the whole sermon, with its temperate and well-balanced assertion of the power of grace.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### *THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL DIRECTLY FORETOLD: ALL IS OF AND FOR GOD*

ROMANS xi. 25-36

THUS far St Paul has rather reasoned than predicted. He has shewn his Gentile friends the naturalness, so to speak, of a restoration of Israel to Christ, and the manifest certainty that such a restoration will bring blessing to the world. Now he advances to the direct assertion, made with a Prophet's full authority, that so it shall be. "*How much rather shall they be grafted into their own Olive?*" The question implies the assertion; nothing remains but to open it in full.

Ver. 25. **For I would not have you ignorant, brethren, of this mystery**, this fact in God's purposes, impossible to be known without revelation,* but luminous when revealed; (**that you may not be wise in your own esteem**, valuing yourselves on an insight which is all the while only a partial glimpse); **that failure of perception** (πώρωσις), **in a measure**, in the case of many, not all, of the nation, **has come upon Israel**, and will

* Such is the normal meaning of μυστήριον in the N. T. It is a thing which in itself may or may not be what we mean by "mysterious." But it is a thing which mere observation and reasoning cannot *à priori* arrive at; God must disclose it.

continue **until the fulness** * **of the Gentiles shall come in,** until Gentile conversion shall be in some sense a flowing tide. Ver. 26. **And so all Israel,** Israel as a mass, no longer as by scattered units, **shall be saved,** coming to the feet of Him in whom alone is man's salvation from judgment and from sin; **as it stands written** (Psal. xiv. 7, Isai. lix. 20, with Isai. xxvii. 9), "**There shall come from Sion the Deliverer; He shall turn away all impiety** (*ἀσεβείας*) **from Jacob; and such they shall find the covenant I shall have** Ver. 27. **granted,**† such shall prove to be My promise and provision, 'ordered and sure,' **when I shall take away their sins,**" in the day of My pardoning and restoring return to them.

This is a memorable passage. It is in the first place one of the most definitely predictive of all the prophetic utterances of the Epistles. Apart from all problems of explanation in detail, it gives us this as its message on the whole; that there lies hidden in the future, for the race of Israel, a critical period of overwhelming blessing. If anything is revealed as fixed in the eternal plan, which, never violating the creature's will yet is not subject to it, it is this. We have heard the Apostle speak fully, and without compromise, of the sin of Israel; the hardened or paralysed spiritual perception, the refusal to submit to pure grace, the restless quest for a valid self-righteousness, the deep exclusive arrogance. And thus the promise of coming mercy, such as shall surprise the world, sounds all the more sovereign and magnificent. It shall come; so says Christ's prophet Paul. Not because of historical ante-

* Πλήρωμα is the practical realization of an ideal.

† So we paraphrase *αὕτη αὐτοῖς ἡ παρ' Ἐμοῦ διαθήκη.*

cedents, or in the light of general principles, but because of the revelation of the Spirit, he speaks of that wonderful future as if it were in full view from the present; "*All Israel shall be saved.*"

We read "no date prefixed." As far as this chapter is concerned, years and days are as if they were not. On the whole, surely, a large range of process is in his view; he cannot expect to see fulfilled within a narrow season the accomplishment of all the preliminaries to the great event. But he says nothing about this. All we gather is that he sees in the future a great progress of Gentile Christianity; a great impression to be made by this on the mind of Israel; a vast and comparatively sudden awakening of Israel, by the grace of God, however brought to bear; the salvation of Israel in Christ on a national scale; "the receiving of them again"; and "life from the dead" as the result—life from the dead to the world at large. However late or soon, with whatever attendant events, divine or human, thus it shall be. The "*spiritual failure of perception in part*" shall vanish. "*The Deliverer shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.*" "*All Israel shall be saved.*"

"Believest thou the Prophets?" The question, asked of Agrippa by St Paul, comes to us from this prediction of his own. "Lord, we believe." Our Master knows that for us in our day it is not easy. The bad air of materialism, and the profound and stolid fatalism which it involves, is thick around us. And one symptom of its malign influence is the growing tendency in the Church to limit, to minimize, to explain if possible away, from the Scriptures, the properly and distinctively superhuman, whether of work or word. Men bearing the Christian name, and bearing

it often with loyal and reverent intention, seem to think far otherwise than their Lord thought about this very element of prediction in the holy Book, and would have us believe that it is no great thing to grasp, and to contend for. But as for us, we desire in all things to be of the opinion of Him who is the eternal Truth and Light, and who took our nature, expressly, as to one great purpose, in order to unfold to us articulately His opinion. He lived and died in the light and power of predictive Scripture. He predicted. He rose again to commission His Apostles, as the Spirit should teach them, to see "things to come" (John xvi. 13). To us, this oracle of His "chosen Vessel" gives us articles of faith and hope. We do not understand, but we believe, because here it is written, that after these days of the prevalence of unbelief, after all these questions, loud or half articulate, angry or agonizing, "Where is the promise?" the world shall see a spiritual miracle on a scale unknown before. "*All Israel shall be saved.*" Even so, Lord Jesus Christ, the Deliverer. Fill us with the patience of this hope, for Thy chosen race, and for the world.

It is almost a pain to turn from this conspectus of the passage to a discussion of some of its details. But it is necessary; and for our purpose it need be only brief. Whatever the result may be, it will leave untouched the grandeur of the central promise.

1. "*Until the fulness of the Gentiles come in.*" Does this mean that the stream of Gentile conversions shall have *flowed and ceased*, before the great blessing comes to Israel? Certainly the Greek may carry this meaning; perhaps, taken quite apart, it carries it more easily than any other. But it has this difficulty, that it would assign to the "*salvation*" of Israel no

influence of blessing upon the Gentile world. Now ver. 12 has implied that "*the fulness*" of Israel is to be the more-than-wealth of "*the world*," of "*the Gentiles*." And ver. 15 has implied, if we have read it aright, that it is to be to "*the world*" as "*life from the dead*." This leads us to explain the phrase here to refer not to the close of the ingathering of the Gentile children of God, but to a time when that process shall be, so to speak, running high.* That time of great and manifest grace shall be the occasion to Israel of the shock, as it were, of blessing; and from Israel's blessing shall date an unmeasured further access of divine good for the world.

As we pass, let us observe the light thrown by these sentences on the duty of the Church in evangelizing the Gentiles for the Jews, as well as the Jews for the Gentiles. *Both* holy enterprises have a destined effect outside themselves. The evangelist of Africa, India, China, is working for the hour of the "salvation of all Israel." The evangelist of the Hebrew Dispersion is preparing Israel for that hour of final blessing when the "saved" nation shall, in the hand of God, kindle the world with holy life.

2. "*All Israel shall be saved*." It has been held by some interpreters that this points to the Israel of God, the spiritual sons of Abraham. If so, it would be fairly paraphrased as a promise that when the Gentile conversions are complete, and the "spiritual failure of perception" gone from the Jewish heart, the family of faith shall be complete. But surely it puts violence on words, and on thought, to explain "Israel" in this whole passage mystically. Interpretation becomes an arbitrary

* The aorist εἰσέλθῃ may rather gather up the great ingathering into one thought than mark a narrow crisis in it.

work if we may suddenly do so here, where the antithesis of Israel and "the Gentiles" is the very theme of the message. No; we have here the nation, chosen once to a mysterious speciality in the spiritual history of man, chosen with a choice never cancelled, however abeyant. A blessing is in view for the nation; a blessing spiritual, divine, all of grace, quite individual in its action on each member of the nation, but national in the scale of its results. We are not obliged to press the word "*all*" to a rigid literality. Nor are we obliged to limit the crisis of blessing to anything like a moment of time. But we may surely gather that the numbers blessed will be at least the vast majority, and that the work will not be chronic but critical. A transition, relatively swift and wonderful, shall shew the world a nation penitent, faithful, holy, given to God.

3. The quotations from Psalms and Prophets (verses 26, 27) offer more questions than one. They are closely interlaced, and they are not literal quotations. "*Out of Sion*" takes the place of "*for Zion.*" "*He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob*" takes the place of "*For them that turn from transgression in Jacob.*" "*This is the covenant*" takes the place of "*This is His blessing.*" And there are other minute points of variation. Yet we reverently trace in the originals and the citations, which all alike are the work of prophetic organs of the Spirit, the great ruling thought, identical in both, that "*the Deliverer*" belongs primarily to "*Zion,*" and has in store primarily a blessing for her people.

Are we, with some devout interpreters, to explain the words, "*The Deliverer shall come out of Sion,*" as predicting a personal and visible return of the Ascended Jesus to the literal Zion, in order to the salvation of Israel, and

an outgoing of Him from thence to the Dispersion, or the world, in millennial glory? We deliberately forbear, in this exposition, to discuss in detail the great controversy thus indicated. We leave here on one side some questions, eagerly and earnestly asked. Will Israel return to the Land as Christian or as anti-Christian? Will the immediate power for their conversion be the visible Return of the Lord, or will it be an effusion of His Spirit, by which, spiritually, He shall visit and bless? What will be the attendant works and wonders of the time? All we do now is to express the conviction that the prophetic quotations here cannot be held to predict *unmistakably* a visible and local Return. If we read them aright, their import is satisfied by a paraphrase somewhat thus: "It stands predicted that to Zion, that is, to Israel, belongs the Deliverer of man, and that for Israel He is to do His work, whenever finally it is done, with a speciality of grace and glory." Thus explained, the "*shall come*" of ver. 26 is the abstract future of divine purpose. In the eternal plan, the Redeemer was, when He first came to earth, to come to, for, and from "Zion." And His saving work was to be on lines, and for issues, for ever characterized by that fact.

Assuredly the Lord Jesus Christ is, personally, literally, visibly, and to His people's eternal joy, coming again; "this same Jesus, in like manner" (Acts i. 11). And as the ages unfold themselves, assuredly the insight of the believing Church into the fulness and, if we may say so, manifoldness of that great prospect grows. But it still seems to us that a deep and reverent caution is called for before we attempt to treat of any detail of that prospect, as regards time, season, mode, as if we quite knew. Across *all* lines of interpretation of unfulfilled

prophecy—to name one problem only—it lies as an unsolved riddle how all the saints of all ages are equally bidden to watch, as those who "know not *what hour* their Lord shall come."

But let us oftener and oftener, however we may differ in detail, recite to one another the glorious essence of our hope. "To them that look for Him will He appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation"; "We shall meet the Lord in the air"; "So shall we be ever with the Lord" (Heb. ix. 28, 1 Thess. iv. 17).

We shall never quite understand the chronology and process of unfulfilled prophecy, till then.

Now briefly and in summary the Apostle concludes this "Epistle within the Epistle"; this oracle about Israel. **As regards the Gospel,** from the point of
Ver. 28. view of the evangelization of the world apart from Judaism, that "gospelling" which was, as it were, precipitated by the rebellion of Israel, **they are enemies, on account of you,** permitted, for your sakes, in a certain sense, to take a hostile attitude towards the Lord and His Christ, and to be treated accordingly; **but as regards the election,** from the point of view of the divine choice, **they are beloved, on account of the**
Ver. 29. **Fathers; for irrevocable* are the gifts and the call of our (τοῦ) God.** The "*gifts*" of unmerited choice, of a love uncaused by the goodness of its object, but coming from the depth of the Eternal; the "*call*" which not only invites the creature, but effects the end of the invitation†; these are things which in their nature

* Ἀμεταμέλητα: literally, "*unrepented-of,*" and so, "*admitting no repentance,*" μεταμελεία, "*change of mind.*" This is fairly represented by "*irrevocable.*"

† See above, p. 19.

are not variable with the variations of man and of time. The nation so gifted and called, "not according to its works," is for ever the unalterable object of the eternal affection.

May we not extend the reference of a sentence so absolute in its oracular brevity, and take it to speak the secret of an indefectible mercy not only to nation, but to individual? Here as elsewhere we shall need to remember the rule which bids us, in the heights and depths of all truth, "go to both extremes." Here as elsewhere we must be reverently careful how we apply the oracle, and to whom. But does not the oracle say this, that where the eternal Love has, without merit, in divine speciality, settled upon a person, there, not arbitrarily but by a law, which we cannot explain but which we can believe, it abides for ever? Still, this is a reflection to be made only in passing here. The immediate matter is a chosen people, not a chosen soul; and so he proceeds:

Ver. 30. **For as once you obeyed not our (τῷ) God, but now,** in the actual state of things, in His grace, **found mercy, on occasion of their disobedience;**

Ver. 31. **so they too now obeyed not, on occasion of your mercy,** in mysterious connexion with the compassion which, in your pagan darkness, revealed salvation to you,* **that they too may find mercy.** Yes, even their "*disobedience*," in the mystery of grace, was permitted *in order to* their ultimate blessing; it was to be overruled to that self-discovery which lies deep in all true repentance, and springs up towards life eternal in

* It is possible to render here: "*they did not obey your mercy*"; *i.e.*, they refused submission to that Gospel in which you found embodied the mercy of God. But the balance of thoughts and sentences is in favour of the rendering above.

the saving "confidence of self-despair." The pagan (ch. i.) was brought to self-discovery as a rebel against God indicated in nature; the Jew (ch. ii.) as a rebel against God revealed in Christ. This latter, if such a comparison is possible, was the more difficult and as it were advanced work in the divine plan. It took place, or rather it is taking and shall take place, later in order, and nearer to the final and universal triumph of redemption. Ver. 32. **For God shut them all** (*τοὺς πάντας*) **up into disobedience, that He might have mercy upon them all.** With a *fiat* of judicial permission He let the Gentile develop his resistance to right into unnatural outrage. He let the Jew develop his into the desperate rejection of his own glorious Messiah. But He gave the *fiat* not as a God who did not care, a mere supreme Law, a Power sitting unconcerned above the scene of sin. He let the disease burst into the plague-spot in order that the guilty victim might ask at last for His remedy, and might receive it as mere and most astonishing mercy.

Let us not misuse the passage by reading into it a vain hope of an indiscriminate actual salvation, at the last, of all individuals of the race; a predestinarian hope for which Scripture not only gives no valid evidence, but utters against it what at least sound like the most urgent and unequivocal of its warnings. The context here, as we saw in another connexion just now, has to do rather with masses than with persons; with Gentiles and Jews in their common characteristics rather than taken as individuals. Yet let us draw from the words, with reverent boldness, a warrant to our faith wholly to trust the Eternal to be, even in the least fathomable of His dealings, true to Himself, true to eternal Love, whatever be the action He shall take.

Here the Apostle's voice, as we seem to listen to it, pauses for a moment, as he passes into unspoken thoughts of awe and faith. He has now given out his prophetic burthen, telling us Gentiles how great has been the sin of Israel, but how great also is Israel's privilege, and how sure his coming mercy. And behind this grand special revelation there still rise on his soul those yet more majestic forms of truth which he has led us to look upon before; the Righteousness of God, the justifying grace, the believing soul's dominion over sin, the fulness of the Spirit, the coming glory of the saints, the emancipated Universe, the eternal Love. What remains, after this mighty process of spiritual discoveries, but to adore? Listen, as he speaks again, and again the pen moves upon the paper:

Ver. 33. **Oh depth of wealth of God's wisdom and knowledge too! How past all searching are**
Ver. 34. **His judgments, and past all tracking are His ways! "For who ever knew the Lord's mind?**
Ver. 35. **Or who ever proved His counsellor?"* Or who ever first gave to Him, and requital shall be**
Ver. 36. **made to the giver (αὐτῷ)? Because out of Him, and through Him, and unto Him, are all things†: to Him be the glory, unto the ages. Amen.**

Even so, Amen. We also prostrate our being, with the Apostle, with the Roman saints, with the whole Church, with all the company of heaven, and give ourselves to that action of pure worship in which the creature, sinking lowest in his own eyes, yea out of his

* He quotes nearly verbatim from Isai. xl. 13. Cp. Jerem. xxiii. 18.

† Τὰ πάντα: the Greek gives us at once the items and the sum of the "*all.*"

own sight altogether, rises highest into the light of his Maker. What a moment this is, what an occasion, for such an approach to Him who is the infinite and personal Fountain of being, and of redemption! We have been led from reason to reason, from doctrine to doctrine, from one link to another in a golden chain of redeeming mercies. We have had the dream of human merit expelled from the heart with arrows of light; and the pure glory of a grace most absolute, most merciful, has come in upon us in its place. All along we have been reminded, as it were in fragments and radiant glimpses, that these doctrines, these truths, are no mere principles in the abstract, but expressions of the will and of the love of a Person; that fact full of eternal life, but all too easily forgotten by the human mind, when its study of religion is carried away, if but for an hour, from the foot of the Cross, and of the Throne. But now all these lines converge upwards to their Origin. By the Cross they reach the Throne. Through the Work of the SON—One with the FATHER, for of the Son too it is written (Col. i. 16) that "all things are through Him, and unto Him"—through His Work, and in it, we come to the Father's Wisdom and Knowledge, which drew the plan of blessing, and as it were calculated and furnished all its means. We touch that point where the creature gravitates to its final rest, the vision of the Glory of God. We repose, with a profound and rejoicing silence, before the fact of mysteries too bright for our vision. After all the revelations of the Apostle we own with him in faith, with an acquiescence deep as our being, the fact that there is no searching, no tracking out, the final secrets of the ways of God. It becomes to us wonderfully sufficient, in the light of Christ, to know that "the Lord, the Lord

God, merciful and gracious," is also Sovereign, Ultimate, His own eternal Satisfaction ; that it is infinitely fit and blessed that, as His Will is the true efficient cause of all things, and His Presence their secret of continuance, so He is Himself their final Cause, their End, their Goal ; they fulfil their idea, they find their bliss, in being altogether His ; "all things are UNTO HIM."

"*To whom be the glory, unto the ages. Amen.*" The advancing "ages," αἰῶνες, the infinite developments of the eternal life, what do we know about them? Almost nothing, except the greatest fact of all ; that in them for ever the redeemed creature will glorify not itself but the Creator ; finding an endless and ever fuller youth, an inexhaustible motive, a rest impossible to break, a life in which indeed "they *cannot* die any more," in surrendering always all its blissful wealth of being to the will and use of the BLESSED ONE.

In these "ages" we already are, in Christ. We shall indeed grow for ever with their eternal growth, in Him, to the glory of the grace of God. But let us not forget that we are already in their course, as regards that life of ours which is hid with Christ in God. With that recollection, let us give ourselves often, and as by the "second nature" of grace, to adoration. Not necessarily to frequent long abstractions of our time from the active services of life ; we need only read on into the coming passages of the Epistle to be reminded that we are hallowed, in our Lord, to a life of unselfish contact with all the needs around us. But let that life have for its interior, for its animation, the spirit of worship. Taking by faith our all from God, let us inwardly always give it back to Him, as those who not only own with the simplest gratitude that He has redeemed us from condemnation and from sin, but who have seen with

an adoring intuition that we and our all are of the "all things" which, being "of Him," and "by Him," are also wholly "unto Him," by an absolute right, by the ultimate law of our being, as we are the creatures of the eternal Love.

## CHAPTER XXV

### *CHRISTIAN CONDUCT THE ISSUE OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH*

ROMANS xii. 1-8

AGAIN we may conjecture a pause, a long pause and deliberate, in the work of Paul and Tertius. We have reached the end, generally speaking, of the dogmatic and so to speak oracular contents of the Epistle. We have listened to the great argument of Righteousness, Sanctification, and final Redemption. We have followed the exposition of the mysterious unbelief and the destined restoration of the chosen nation; a theme which we can see, as we look back on the perspective of the whole Epistle, to have a deep and suggestive connexion with what went before it; for the experience of Israel, in relation to the sovereign will and grace of God, is full of light thrown upon the experience of the soul. Now in order comes the bright sequel of this mighty antecedent, this complex but harmonious mass of spiritual facts and historical illustrations of the will and ways of the Eternal. The voice of St Paul is heard again; and he comes full upon the Lord's message of duty, conduct, character.

As out of some cleft in the face of the rocky hills rolls the full pure stream born in their depths, and runs under the sun and sky through green meadows

and beside the thirsty homes of men, so here from the inmost mysteries of grace comes the message of all-comprehensive holy duty. The Christian, filled with the knowledge of an eternal love, is told how not to dream, but to serve, with all the mercies of God for his motive.

This is indeed in the manner of the New Testament; this vital sequence of duty and doctrine; the divine Truths first, and then and therefore the blessed Life. To take only St Paul's writings, the Ephesian and Colossian Epistles are each, practically, bisected by a line which has eternal facts before it and present duties, done in the light and power of them, after it. But the whole Book of God, in its texture all over, shews the same phenomenon. Someone has remarked with homely force that in the Bible everywhere, if only we dig deep enough, we find "*Do right*" at the bottom. And we may add that everywhere also we have only to dig one degree deeper to find that the precept is rooted in eternal underlying facts of divine truth and love.

Scripture, that is to say, its Lord and Author, does not give us the terrible gift of a precept isolated and in a vacuum. It supports its commandments on a base of cogent motive; and it fills the man who is to keep them with the power of a living Presence in him; this we have seen at large in the pages of the Epistle already traversed. But then, on the other hand, the Lord of Scripture does not leave the motive and the Presence without the articulate precept. Rather, because they are supplied and assured to the believer, it spreads out all the more amply and minutely a moral directory before his eyes. It tells him, as a man who now rests on God and loves Him, and in whom God dwells, not only in general that he is to "walk

and please God" but in particular "*how*" to do it (1 Thess. iv. 1). It takes his life in detail, and applies the will of the Lord to it. It speaks to him in explicit terms about moral purity, in the name of the Holy One; about patience and kindness, in the name of redeeming Love; about family duties, in the name of the Father and of the Son; about civic duties, in the name of the King Eternal. And the whole outline and all the details thus become to the believer things not only of duty but of possibility, of hope, of the strong interest given by the thought that thus and thus the beloved Master would have us use His divine gift of life. Nothing is more wonderfully free, from one point of view, than love and spiritual power. But if the love is indeed given by God and directed towards Him in Christ, the man who loves cannot possibly wish to be his own law, and to spend his soul's power upon his own ideas or preferences. His joy and his conscious aim must be to do, in detail, the will of the Lord who is now so dear to him; and therefore, in detail, to know it.

Let us take deep note of this characteristic of Scripture, its minuteness of precept, in connexion with its revelation of spiritual blessing. If in any sense we are called to be teachers of others, let us carry out the example. Richard Cecil, wise and pregnant counsellor in Christ, says that if he had to choose between preaching precepts and preaching privileges, he would preach privileges; because the privileges of the true Gospel tend in their nature to suggest and stimulate right action, while the precepts taken alone do not reveal the wealth of divine life and power. But Cecil, like his great contemporaries of the Evangelical Revival, constantly and diligently preached as a fact both privilege and precept; opening with energetic

hands the revealed fulness of Christ, and then and therefore teaching "them which had believed through grace" not only the idea of duty, but its details. Thomas Scott, at Olney, devoted his week-night "lecture" in the parish church, almost exclusively, to instructions in daily Christian life. Assuming that his hearers "knew Christ" in personal reality, he told them how to be Christians in the home, in the shop, in the farm; how to be consistent with their regenerate life as parents, children, servants, masters, neighbours, subjects. There have been times, perhaps, when such didactic preaching has been too little used in the Church. But the men who, under God, in the last century and the early years of this century, revived the message of Christ Crucified and Risen as all in all for our salvation, were eminently diligent in teaching Christian morals. At the present day, in many quarters of our Christendom, there is a a remarkable revival of the desire to apply saving truth to common life, and to keep the Christian always mindful that he not only has heaven in prospect, but is to travel to it, every step, in the path of practical and watchful holiness. This is a sign of divine mercy in the Church. This is profoundly Scriptural.

Meanwhile, God forbid that such "teaching how to live" should ever be given, by parent, pastor, schoolmaster, friend, where it does not first pass through the teacher's own soul into his own life. Alas for us if we shew ever so convincingly, and even ever so winningly, the bond between salvation and holiness, and do not "walk accurately" (Eph. v. 15) ourselves, in the details of our walk.

As we actually approach the rules of holiness now before us, let us once more recollect what we have

seen all along in the Epistle, that holiness is the aim and issue of the entire Gospel. It is indeed an "evidence of life," infinitely weighty in the enquiry whether a man knows God indeed and is on the way to His heaven. But it is much more; it is the expression of life; it is the form and action in which life is intended to come out. In our orchards (to use again a parable we have used already) the golden apples are evidences of the tree's species, and of its life. But a wooden label could tell us the species, and leaves can tell the life. The fruit is more than label or leaf; it is the thing for which the tree is there. We who believe are "chosen" and "ordained" to "bring forth fruit" (John xv. 16), fruit much and lasting. The eternal Master walks in His garden for the very purpose of seeing if the trees bear. And the fruit He looks for is no visionary thing; it is a life of holy serviceableness to Him and to our fellows, in His Name.

But now we draw near again and listen:

Ver. 1. **I exhort you therefore, brethren, by means of the compassions of God**; using as my logic and my fulcrum this "depth of riches" we have explored; this wonderful Redemption, with its sovereignty, its mercy, its acceptance, its holiness, its glory; this overruling of even sin and rebellion, in Gentile and in Jew, into occasions for salvation; these compassionate indications in the nearer and the eternal future of golden days yet to come;—**I exhort you therefore to present**, to give over, **your bodies as a sacrifice**, an altar-offering, **living, holy, well-pleasing, unto God; for this** (ἥτις) **is your rational devotion** (λατρεία). That is to say, it is the "*devotion*," the *cultus*, the worship-service, which is done by the reason, the mind, the thought and will, of the man who has found God in Christ. The Greek

term, *latreia*, is tinged with associations of ritual and temple; but it is taken here, and qualified by its adjective, on purpose to be lifted, as in paradox, into the region of the soul. The robes and incense of the visible sanctuary are here out of sight; the individual believer is at once priest, sacrifice, and altar; he immolates himself to the Lord,—living, yet no longer to himself.

But observe the pregnant collocation here of "*the body*" with "*the reason*." "*Give over your bodies*"; not now your spirit, your intelligence, your sentiments, your aspirations, but "*your bodies*," to your Lord. Is this an anti-climax? Have we retreated from the higher to the lower, in coming from the contemplation of sovereign grace and the eternal glory to that of the physical frame of man? No more than the Lord Jesus did, when He walked down from the hill of Transfiguration to the crowd below, and to the sins and miseries it presented. He came from the scene of glory to serve men in its abiding inner light. And even He, in the days of His flesh, served men, ordinarily, only through His sacred body; walking to them with His feet; touching them with His hands; meeting their eyes with His; speaking with His lips the words that were spirit and life. As with Him so with us. It is only through the body, practically, that we can "serve our generation by the will of God." Not without the body but through it the spirit must tell on the embodied spirits around us. We look, we speak, we hear, we write, we nurse, we travel, by means of these material servants of the will, our living limbs. Without the body, where should we be, as to other men? And therefore, without the surrender of the body, where are we, as to other men, from the point of view of the will of God?

So there is a true sense in which, while the surrender of the will is all important and primary from one point of view, the surrender of the body, the "giving over" of the body, to be the implement of God's will in us, is all-important, is crucial, from another. For many a Christian life it is the most needful of all things to remember this; it is the oblivion, or the mere half-recollection, of this which keeps that life an almost neutral thing as to witness and service for the Lord.

Ver. 2. **And do not grow** * **conformed to this world,** this *æon* (*αἰών*), the course and state of things in this scene of sin and death; do not play "the worldling," assuming a guise (*σχῆμα*) which in itself is fleeting, and which for you, members of Christ, must also be hollow; **but grow transfigured,** living out a lasting and genuine change of tone and conduct, in which the figure (*μορφὴ*) is only the congenial expression of the essence †—**by the renewal of your mind,** by using as an implement in the holy process that divine light which has cleared your intelligence of the mists of self-love, and taught you to see as with new eyes "the splendour of the will of God"; **so as that you test,** discerning as by a spiritual touchstone, **what is the will of God, the good, and acceptable, and perfect (will).**

Such was to be the method, and such the issue, in this development of the surrendered life. All is divine in origin and secret. The eternal "compassions," and the sovereign work of the renewing and illuminating

* The Greek imperative is present, and indicates a process.

† See Trench, *N. T. Synonyms, s.v.* *μορφή*, for the pregnant difference of the two nouns which are the distinctive elements here of the two verbs.

Spirit, are supposed before the believer can move one step. On the other hand the believer, in the full conscious action of his renewed "intelligence," is to ponder the call to seek "transfiguration" in a life of unworldly love, and to attain it in detail by using the new insight of a regenerated heart. He is to look, with the eyes of the soul, straight through every mist of self-will to the now beloved Will of God, as his deliberate choice, seen to be welcome, seen to be perfect, not because all is understood, but because the man is joyfully surrendered to the all-trusted Master. Thus he is to move along the path of an ever brightening transfiguration; at once open-eyed, and in the dark; seeing the Lord, and so with a sure instinct gravitating to His will, yet content to let the mists of the unknown always hang over the next step but one.

It is a process, not a crisis; "*grow* transfigured." The origin of the process, the liberation of the movement, is, at least in idea, as critical as possible; "*Give over your bodies.*" That precept is conveyed, in its Greek form (παραστῆσαι, aorist), so as to suggest precisely the thought of a critical surrender. The Roman Christian, and his English younger brother, are called here, as they were above (vi. 13, 19), to a transaction with the Lord quite definite, whether or no the like has taken place before, or shall be done again. They are called, as if once for all, to look their Lord in the face, and to clasp His gifts in their hands, and then to put themselves and His gifts altogether into *His* hands, for perpetual use and service. So, from the side of his conscious experience, the Christian is called to a "hallowing of himself" decisive, crucial, instantaneous. But its outcome is to be a perpetual progression, a growth, not so much "into" grace as "*in*" it

(2 Pet. iii. 18), in which the surrender in purpose becomes a long series of deepening surrenders in habit and action, and a larger discovery of self, and of the Lord, and of His will, takes effect in the "shining" of the transfigured life "more and more, unto the perfect day" (Prov. iv. 18).

Let us not distort this truth of progression, and its correlative truth of the Christian's abiding imperfection. Let us not profane it into an excuse for a life which at the best is stationary, and must almost certainly be retrograde, because not intent upon a genuine advance. Let us not withhold "*our bodies*" from the sacred surrender here enjoined upon us, and yet expect to realize somehow, at some vague date, a "*transfiguration, by the renewal of our mind.*" We shall be indeed disappointed of that hope. But let us be at once stimulated and sobered by the spiritual facts. As we are "yielded to the Lord," in sober reality, we are in His mercy "liberated for growth." But the growth is to come, among other ways, by the diligent application of "the renewal of our mind" to the details of His blessed Will.

And it will come, in its true development, only in the line of holy humbleness. To exalt oneself, even in the spiritual life, is not to grow; it is to wither. So the Apostle goes on:

Ver. 3. **For I say, through the grace that has been given me,** "*the grace*" of power for apostolic admonition, **to every one who is among you, not to be high-minded beyond what his mind should be, but to be minded toward sober-mindedness, as to each God distributed faith's measure.** That is to say, let the individual never, in himself, forget his brethren, and the mutual relation of each to all in Christ. Let him

never make himself the centre, or think of his personal salvation as if it could really be taken alone. The Lord, the sovereign Giver of faith, the Almighty Bringer of souls into acceptance and union with Christ by faith, has given thy faith to thee, and thy brother's faith to him; and why? That the individual gifts, the bounty of the One Giver, might join the individuals not only to the Giver but to one another, as recipients of riches many yet one, and which are to be spent in service one yet many. The One Lord distributes the one faith-power into many hearts, "*measuring*" it out to each, so that the many, individually believing in the One, may not collide and contend, but lovingly co-operate in a manifold service, the issue of their "like precious faith" (2 Pet. i. 2) conditioned by the variety of their lives. So comes in that pregnant parable of the Body, found only in the writings of St Paul, and in four only of his Epistles, but so stated there as to take a place for ever in the foreground of Christian truth. We have it here in the Romans, and in larger detail in the contemporary 1 Corinthians (xii. 12-27). We have it finally and fully in the later Epistolary Group, of the first Roman Captivity—in Ephesians and Colossians. There the supreme point in the whole picture, the glorious HEAD, and His relation to the Limb and to the Body, comes out in all its greatness, while in these earlier passages it appears only incidentally.* But each presentation, the earlier and the later, is alike true to its purpose. When St Paul wrote to the Asiatics, he was in presence of errors which beclouded the living splendour of the Head. When he wrote to the Romans, he was concerned rather with the inter-

* See 1 Cor. xii. 21: "*Can the head say* to the feet, etc.?"

dependence of the limbs, in the practice of Christian social life.

We have spoken of "*the parable* of the Body." But is the word "parable" adequate? "What if earth be but the shadow of heaven?" What if our physical frame, the soul's house and vehicle, be only the feebler counterpart of that great Organism in which the exalted Christ unites and animates His saints? That union is no mere aggregation, no mere alliance of so many men under the presidency of an invisible Leader. It is a thing of life. Each to the living Head, and so each to all His members, we are joined in that wonderful connexion with a tenacity, and with a relation, genuine, strong, and close as the eternal life can make it. The living, breathing man, multifold yet one, is but the reflection, as it were, of "Christ Mystical," the true Body with its heavenly Head.

Ver. 4. **For just as in one body we have many limbs, but all the limbs have not the same function,**

Ver. 5. **so we, the many, are one body in Christ,** in our personal union with Him, **but in detail** (*τὸ δὲ καθεῖς*), **limbs of one another,** coherent and related not as neighbours merely but as complementary parts in the whole.

Ver. 6. **But having endowments** (*χαρίσματα*)—**according to the grace that was given to us—differing, be it prophecy,** inspired utterance, a power from above, yet mysteriously conditioned (1 Cor. xiv. 32) by the judgment and will of the utterer, **let it follow the proportion of the** man's **faith,** let it be true to his entire dependence on the revealed Christ, not left at the mercy of his mere emotions, or as it were played upon by alien unseen powers;

Ver. 7. **be it active service** (*διακονία*), let the man be **in his service,** wholly given to it, not turning aside to covet

his brother's more mystic gift; **be it the teacher,** let him likewise be **in his teaching,** whole-hearted in his allotted work, free from ambitious outlooks from it; **be**
Ver. 8. **it the exhorter,** let him be **in his exhortation; the distributer** of his means, for God, **with open-handedness; the superintendent,** of Church, or of home, **with earnestness; the pitier,** (large and unofficial designation!) **with gladness,** doubling his gifts and works of mercy by the hallowed brightness of a heart set free from the aims of self, and therefore wholly at the service of the needing.

This paragraph of eight verses lies here before us, full all along of that deep characteristic of Gospel life, surrender for service. The call is to a profoundly passive inward attitude, with an express view to a richly active outward usefulness. Possessed, and knowing it, of the compassions of God, the man is asked to give himself over to Eternal Love for purposes of unworldly and unambitious employment in the path chosen for him, whatever it may be. In this respect above all others he is to be "*not conformed to this world*"—that is, he is to make not himself but his Lord his pleasure and ambition. "*By the renewal of his mind*" he is to view the Will of God from a point inaccessible to the unregenerate, to the unjustified, to the man not emancipated in Christ from the tyranny of sin. He is to see in it his inexhaustible interest, his line of quest and hope, his ultimate and satisfying aim; because of the practical identity of the Will and the infinitely good and blessed Bearer of it. And this more than surrender of his faculties, this happy and reposeful consecration of them, is to shew its reality in one way above all others first; in a humble estimate of self as compared with brother Christians, and a watchful

willingness to do—not another's work, but the duty that lies next.

This relative aspect of the life of self-surrender is the burthen of this great paragraph of duty. In the following passage we shall find precepts more in detail; but here we have what is to govern all along the whole stream of the obedient life. The man rich in Christ is reverently to remember others, and God's will in them, and for them. He is to avoid the subtle temptation to intrude beyond the Master's allotted work *for him*. He is to be slow to think, "I am richly qualified, and could do this thing, and that, and the other, better than the man who does it now." His chastened spiritual instinct will rather go to criticize himself, to watch for the least deficiency in his own doing of the task which at least to-day is his. He will "give himself wholly to this," be it more or less attractive to him in itself. For he works as one who has not to contrive a life as full of success and influence as he can imagine, but to accept a life assigned by the Lord who has first given to him Himself.

The passage itself amply implies that he is to use actively and honestly his renewed *intelligence*. He is to look circumstances and conditions in the face, remembering that in one way or another the will of God is expressed in them. He is to seek to understand not his duties only but his personal equipments for them, natural as well as spiritual. But he is to do this as one whose "mind" is "renewed" by his living contact and union with his redeeming King, and who has really laid his faculties at the feet of an absolute Master, who is the Lord of order as well as of power.

What peace, energy, and dignity comes into a life

which is consciously and deliberately thus surrendered! The highest range of duties, as man counts highest, is thus disburthened both of its heavy anxieties and of its temptations to a ruinous self-importance. And the lowest range, as man counts lowest, is filled with the quiet greatness born of the presence and will of God. In the memoirs of Mme de la Mothe Guyon much is said of her faithful maid-servant, who was imprisoned along with her (in a separate chamber) in the Bastille, and there died, about the year 1700. This pious woman, deeply taught in the things of the Spirit, and gifted with an understanding far above the common, appears never for an hour to have coveted a more ambitious department than that which God assigned her in His obedience. "She desired to be what God would have her be, and to be nothing more, and nothing less. She included time and place, as well as disposition and action. She had not a doubt that God, who had given remarkable powers to Mme Guyon, had called her to the great work in which she was employed. But knowing that her beloved mistress could not go alone, but must constantly have some female attendant, she had the conviction, equally distinct, that she was called to be her maid-servant." *

A great part of the surface of Christian society would be "transfigured" if its depth was more fully penetrated with that spirit. And it is to that spirit that the Apostle here definitely calls us, each and every one, not as with a "counsel of perfection" for the few, but as the will of God for all who have found out what is meant by His "compassions," and have caught even a

* Upham: *Life, etc., of Mme de la M. Guyon*, ch. I.

glimpse of His Will as "good, and acceptable, and perfect."

"I would not have the restless will
That hurries to and fro,
Seeking for some great thing to do
Or secret thing to know;
I would be treated as a child,
And guided where I go."

## CHAPTER XXVI

*CHRISTIAN DUTY: DETAILS OF PERSONAL CONDUCT*

ROMANS xii. 8-21

ST PAUL has set before us the life of surrender, of the "giving-over" of faculty to God, in one great preliminary aspect. The fair ideal (meant always for a watchful and hopeful realization) has been held aloft. It is a life whose motive is the Lord's "compassions"; whose law of freedom is His will; whose inmost aim is, without envy or interference towards our fellow-servants, to "finish the work He hath given *us* to do." Now into this noble outline are to be poured the details of personal conduct which, in any and every line and field, are to make the characteristics of the Christian.

As we listen again, we will again remember that the words are levelled not at a few but at all who are in Christ. The beings indicated here are not the chosen names of a Church Calendar, nor are they the passionless inhabitants of a Utopia. They are all who, in Rome of old, in England now, "have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," "have the Spirit of God dwelling in them," and are living out this wonderful but most practical life in the straight line of their Father's will.

As if he could not heap the golden words too thickly together, St Paul dictates here with even unusual

abruptness and terseness of expression. He leaves syntax very much alone; gives us noun and adjective, and lets them speak for themselves. We will venture to render as nearly verbatim as possible. The English will inevitably seem more rough and crude than the Greek, but the impression given will be truer on the whole to the original than a fuller rendering would be.

Ver. 9. **Your** (*ἡ*) **love, unaffected. Abominating the ill, wedded to** * **the good.**

Ver. 10. **For your brotherly-kindness, full of mutual home-affection** (*φιλόστοργοι*). **For your honour,** your code of precedence, **deferring to one another.**

Ver. 11. **For your earnestness,**† **not slothful. For the Spirit,** as regards your possession and use of the divine Indweller, **glowing.**‡

Ver. 12. **For the Lord, bond-serving.**§ **For your hope,** that is to say, as to the hope of the Lord's Return, **rejoicing. For your affliction, enduring.**

Ver. 13. **For your prayer, persevering. For the wants of the saints,** for the poverty of fellow-Christians, **communicating;** "*sharing*" (*κοινωνοῦντες*), a yet nobler thing than the mere "*giving*" which may ignore the sacred fellowship of the provider and the receiver. **Hospitality** ‖—**prosecuting** (*διώκοντες*) as with a studious

* See the context of 1 Cor. vi. 17 for an apology for this paraphrase of *κολλώμενοι*.

† "*In business*" gives perhaps too special a direction to the thought, as we use the word "*business*" now. Not that that special direction would not have a noble truth in it, rightly understood.

‡ Literally "*boiling*," as a caldron on the fire.

§ This reading, *τῷ κυρίῳ*, as against *τῷ καιρῷ*, appears to be certainly right.—Our rendering is bold; for undoubtedly "*serving the Lord*" meets the Greek grammar more simply. But the datives are hitherto so clearly datives of relation that we think this also must be so explained. We can only apologize for the crude compound "*bond-serving*" by the wish to represent the full force of *δουλεύοντες*.

‖ *Τὴν φιλοξενίαν*: we may paraphrase the article by "*your* hospi-

cultivation. **Bless those who persecute * you; bless, and do not curse.** This was a solemnly appropriate precept, for the community over which, eight years later, the first great Persecution was to break in "blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke." And no doubt there was abundant present occasion for it, even while the scene was comparatively tranquil. Every modern mission-field can illustrate the possibilities of a "persecution" which may be altogether private, or which at most may touch only a narrow neighbourhood; which may never reach the point of technical outrage, yet may apply a truly "fiery trial" to the faithful convert. Even in circles of our decorous English society is no such thing known as the "persecution" of a life "not conformed to this world," though the assault or torture may take forms almost invisible and impalpable, except to the sensibilities of the object of it? For all such cases, as well as for the confessor on the rack, and the martyr in the fire, this precept holds expressly; "*Bless, do not curse.*" In Christ find possible the impossible; let the resentment of nature die, at His feet, in the breath of His love.

Ver. 14.

Ver. 15. **To rejoice with the rejoicing, and to weep with the weeping;** holy duties of the surrendered life, too easily forgotten. Alas, there is such a phenomenon, not altogether rare, as a life whose self-surrender, in some main aspects, cannot be doubted, but which utterly fails in sympathy. A certain spiritual exaltation is allowed actually to harden, or at least to seem to

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tality," or even "*Christian* hospitality." But this would exaggerate the impression it represented.

* Διώκοντας: it seems certain that this word was suggested by the διώκοντες just before, widely different as the references are. But how shall English convey this echo?

harden, the consecrated heart; and the man who perhaps witnesses for God with a prophet's ardour is yet not one to whom the mourner would go for tears and prayer in his bereavement, or the child for a perfectly human smile in its play. But this is not as the Lord would have it be. If indeed the Christian has "given his body over," it is that his eyes, and lips, and hands, may be ready to give loving tokens of fellowship in sorrow, and (what is less obvious) in gladness too, to the human hearts around him.

Ver. 16. **Feeling** * **the same thing towards one another**; animated by a happy identity of sympathy and brotherhood. **Not haughty in feeling,**† **but full of lowly sympathies** ‡; accessible, in an unaffected fellowship, to the poor, the social inferior, the weak and the defeated, and again to the smallest and homeliest interests of all. It was the Lord's example; the little child, the wistful parent, the widow with her mites, the poor fallen woman of the street, could "lead away" (*συναπάγειν*) His blessed sympathies with a touch, while He responded with an unbroken majesty of gracious power, but with a kindness for which condescension seems a word far too cold and distant.

**Do not get to be wise in your own opinion**; be ready always to learn; dread the attitude of mind, too possible even for the man of earnest spiritual purpose, which

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* *Φρονοῦντες*: the word "*thinking*" does not quite rightly represent the Greek. *Φρονεῖν* is not "*to think*," in the sense of articulate reflection, but to have a mental and moral disposition, of whatever kind. A popular use of the word "*to feel*" fairly represents this.

† Lit., "*not* '*minding*,' *affecting, high things*." We paraphrase, to retain the word "*feeling*" for *φρονεῖν*.

‡ Lit., "*being led away with the humble* (*things*)." Some paraphrase is necessary here.

assumes that you have nothing to learn and everything to teach; which makes it easy to criticize and to discredit; and which can prove an altogether repellent thing to the observer from outside, who is trying to estimate the Gospel by its adherent and advocate. **Re-**

Ver. 17. **quiting no one evil for evil**; safe from the spirit of retaliation, in your surrender to Him "who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not." **Taking forethought for good in the sight of all men**; not letting habits, talk, expenses, drift into inconsistency; watching with open and considerate eyes against what others may fairly think to be unchristian in you. Here is no counsel of cowardice, no recommendation of slavery to a public opinion which may be altogether wrong. It is a precept of loyal jealousy for the heavenly Master's honour. His servant is to be nobly indifferent to the world's thought and word where he is sure that God and the world antagonize. But he is to be sensitively attentive to the world's observation where the world, more or less acquainted with the Christian precept or principle, and more or less conscious of its truth and right, is watching, maliciously or it may be wistfully, to see if it governs the Christian's practice. In view of this the man will never be content even with the satisfaction of his own conscience; he will set himself not only to do right, but to be seen to do it. He will not only be true to a monetary trust, for example; he will take care that the proofs of his fidelity shall be open. He will not only mean well towards others; he will take care that his manner and bearing, his dealings and intercourse, shall unmistakably breathe the Christian air.

Ver. 18. **If possible, as regards your side,** (the "*your*" is as emphatic as possible in position and

in meaning,) **living at peace with all men**; yes, even in pagan and hostile Rome. A peculiarly Christian principle speaks here. The men who had "given over their bodies a living sacrifice" might think, imaginably, that their duty was to court the world's enmity, to tilt as it were against its spears, as if the one supreme call was to collide, to fall, and to be glorified. But this would be fanaticism; and the Gospel is never fanatical, for it is the law of love. The surrendered Christian is not, as such, an aspirant for even a martyr's fame, but the servant of God and man. If martyrdom crosses his path, it is met as duty; but he does not court it as *éclat*. And what is true of martyrdom is of course true of every lower and milder form of the conflict of the Church, and of the Christian, in the world.

Nothing more nobly evidences the divine origin of the Gospel than this essential precept; "as far as it lies with *you*, live peaceably with all men." Such wise and kind forbearance and neighbourliness would never have been bound up with the belief of supernatural powers and hopes, if those powers and hopes had been the mere issue of human exaltation, of natural enthusiasm. The supernatural of the Gospel leads to nothing but rectitude and considerateness, in short to nothing but love, between man and man. And why? Because it is indeed divine; it is the message and gift of the living Son of God, in all the truth and majesty of His rightfulness. All too early in the history of the Church "the crown of martyrdom" became an object of enthusiastic ambition. But that was not because of the teaching of the Crucified, nor of His suffering Apostles.

Ver. 19. **Not avenging yourselves, beloved; no, give place to the wrath**; let the angry opponent, the dread

persecutor, have his way, so far as your resistance or retaliation is concerned. "*Beloved*, let us love" (1 John iv. 7); with that strong and conquering love which wins by suffering. And do not fear lest eternal justice should go by default; there is One who will take care of that matter; you may leave it with Him. **For it stands written** (Deut. xxxii. 35), "**To Me belongs vengeance; I will recompense, saith the Lord.**" "**But if**"* (and again he quotes the older Scriptures, finding in the Proverbs (xxv. 21, 22) the same oracular authority as in the Pentateuch), "**but if thy enemy is hungry, give him food; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for so doing thou wilt heap coals of fire on his head**"; taking the best way to the only "*vengeance*" which a saint can wish, namely, your "enemy's" conviction of his wrong, the rising of a burning shame in his soul, and the melting of his spirit in the fire of love. **Be not thou conquered by the evil, but conquer, in the good, the evil.**

Ver. 20.

Ver. 21.

"*In* the good"; as if surrounded by it,† moving invulnerable, in its magic circle, through "the contradiction of sinners," "the provoking of all men." The thought is just that of Psal. xxxi. 18, 19: "How great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee, which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men! Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man; Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from

* Read, ἀλλ' ἐὰν.

† We are aware that not seldom in the N.T. ἐν represents the Hebrew ב (of בכלם) in its familiar instrumental meaning, without any definite trace of *local* imagery. But where the more literal rendering has an obvious fitness it is best to retain it. Thus we render ἐν here by "*by*" not "*in*."

the strife of tongues." "*The good*" of this sentence of St Paul's is no vague and abstract thing; it is "the gift of God" (vi. 28); it is the life eternal found and possessed in union with Christ, our Righteousness, our Sanctification, our Redemption. Practically,* it is "not It but *He*." The Roman convert who should find it more than possible to meet his enemy with love, to do him positive good in his need, with a conquering simplicity of intention, was to do so not so much by an internal conflict between his "better self" and his worse, as by the living power of Christ received in his whole being; by "abiding in Him."

It is so now, and for ever. The open secret of divine peace and love is what it was; as necessary, as versatile, as victorious. And its path of victory is as straight and as sure as of old. And the precept to tread that path, daily and hourly, if occasion calls, is still as divinely binding as it ever was for the Christian, if indeed he has embraced "the mercies of God," and is looking to his Lord to be evermore "transfigured, by the renewing of his mind."

As we review this rich field of the flowers, and of the gold, of holiness, this now completed paragraph of epigrammatic precepts, some leading and pervading principles emerge. We see first that the sanctity of the Gospel is no hushed and cloistered "indifferentism." It is a thing intended for the open field of human life; to be lived out "before the sons of men." A strong positive element is in it. The saint is to "*abominate* the evil"; not only to deprecate it, and deplore. He

* Though the τῳ ἀγαθῳ of the Greek is certainly neuter, by its balance with τὸ κακόν.

is to be energetically "*in earnest.*" He is to "*glow*" with the Spirit, and to "*rejoice*" in the hope of glory. He is to take practical, provident pains to live not only aright, but manifestly aright, in ways which "*all men*" can recognize. Again, his life is to be essentially social. He is contemplated as one who meets other lives at every turn, and he is never to forget or neglect his relation to them. Particularly in the Christian Society, he is cherish the "family affection" of the Gospel; to defer to fellow Christians in a generous humility; to share his means with the poor among them; to welcome the strangers of them to his house. He is to think it a sacred duty to enter into the joys and the sorrows round him. He is to keep his sympathies open for despised people, and for little matters. Then again, and most prominently after all, he is to be ready to suffer, and to meet suffering with a spirit far greater than that of only resignation. He is to bless his persecutor; he is to serve his enemy in ways most practical and active; he is to conquer him for Christ, in the power of a divine communion.

Thus, meanwhile, the life, so positive, so active in its effects, is to be essentially all the while a passive, bearing, enduring, life. Its strength is to spring not from the energies of nature, which may or may not be vigorous in the man, but from an internal surrender to the claim and government of his Lord. He has "presented himself to God" (vi. 13); he has "presented his body, a living sacrifice" (xii. 1). He has recognized, with a penitent wonder and joy, that he is but the limb of a Body, and that his Head is the Lord. His thought is now not for his personal rights, his individual exaltation, but for the glory of his Head, for the fulfilment of the thought of his Head, and for the health and wealth

of the Body, as the great vehicle in the world of the gracious will of the Head.

It is among the chief and deepest of the characteristics of Christian ethics, this passive root below a rich growth and harvest of activity. All through the New Testament we find it expressed or suggested. The first Beatitude uttered by the Lord (Matt. v. 3) is given to "the poor, the mendicant (*πτωχοί*), in spirit." The last (John xx. 29) is for the believer, who trusts without seeing. The radiant portrait of holy Love (1 Cor. xiii.) produces its effect, full of indescribable life as well as beauty, by the combination of almost none but negative touches; the "total abstinence" of the loving soul from impatience, from envy, from self-display, from self-seeking, from brooding over wrong, from even the faintest pleasure in evil, from the tendency to think ill of others. Everywhere the Gospel bids the Christian take sides against himself. He is to stand ready to forego even his surest rights, if only *he* is hurt by so doing; while on the other hand he is watchful to respect even the least obvious rights of others, yea, to consider their weaknesses, and their prejudices, to the furthest just limit. He is "not to resist evil"; in the sense of never fighting for self as self. He is rather to "suffer himself to be defrauded" (1 Cor. vi. 7) than to bring discredit on his Lord in however due a course of law. The straits and humiliations of his earthly lot, if such things are the will of God for him, are not to be materials for his discontent, or occasions for his envy, or for his secular ambition. They are to be his opportunities for inward triumph; the theme of a "song of the Lord," in which he is to sing of strength perfected in weakness, of a power not his own "overshadowing" him (2 Cor. xii. 9, 10).

Such is the passivity of the saints, deep beneath

their serviceable activity. The two are in vital connexion. The root is not the accident but the proper antecedent of the product. For the secret and unostentatious surrender of the will, in its Christian sense, is no mere evacuation, leaving the house swept but empty; it is the reception of the Lord of life into the open castle of the City of Mansoul. It is the placing in His hands of all that the walls contain. And placed in His hands, the castle, and the city, will shew at once, and continually more and more, that not only order but life has taken possession. The surrender of the Moslem is, in its theory, *a mere* submission. The surrender of the Gospel is a reception also; and thus its nature is to come out in "the fruit of the Spirit."

Once more, let us not forget that the Apostle lays his main emphasis here rather on being than on doing. Nothing is said of great spiritual enterprises; everything has to do with the personal conduct of the men who, if such enterprises are done, must do them. This too is characteristic of the New Testament. Very rarely do the Apostles say anything about their converts' duty, for instance, to carry the message of Christ around them in evangelistic aggression. Such aggression was assuredly attempted, and in numberless ways, by the primeval Christians, from those who were "scattered abroad" (Acts viii. 4) after the death of Stephen onwards. The Philippians (ii. 15, 16) "shone as lights in the world, holding out the word of life." The Ephesians (v. 13) penetrated the surrounding darkness, being themselves "light in the Lord." The Thessalonians (1, i. 8) made their witness felt "in Macedonia, and Achaia, and in every place." The Romans, encouraged by St Paul's presence and sufferings, "were bold to speak the word without fear" (Phil. i. 14).

St John (3 Ep. 7) alludes to missionaries who, "for the Name's sake, went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles."

Yet is it not plain that, when the Apostles thought of the life and zeal of their converts, their first care, by far, was that they should be wholly conformed to the will of God in personal and social matters? This was the indispensable condition to their being, as a community, what they must be if they were to prove true witnesses and propagandists for their Lord.

God forbid that we should draw from this phenomenon one inference, however faint, to thwart or discredit the missionary zeal now in our day rising like a fresh, pure tide in the believing Church. May our Master continually animate His servants in the Church at home to seek the lost around them, to recall the lapsed with the voice of truth and love. May He multiply a hundredfold the scattered host of His "witnesses in the uttermost parts of the earth," through the dwelling-places of those eight hundred millions who are still pagan, not to speak of the lesser yet vast multitudes of misbelievers, Mahometan and Jewish. But neither in missionary enterprise, nor in any sort of activity for God and man, is this deep suggestion of the Epistles to be forgotten. What the Christian does is even more important than what he says. What he is is the all-important antecedent to what he does. He is "nothing yet as he ought to" be if, amidst even innumerable efforts and aggressions, he has not "presented his body a living sacrifice" for his Lord's purposes, not his own; if he has not learnt, in his Lord, an unaffected love, a holy family affection, a sympathy with griefs and joys around him, a humble esteem of himself, and the blessed art of giving way to wrath, and of overcoming evil in "the good" of the presence of the Lord.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### *CHRISTIAN DUTY; IN CIVIL LIFE AND OTHERWISE: LOVE*

ROMANS xiii. 1-10

A NEW topic now emerges, distinct, yet in close and natural connexion. We have been listening to precepts for personal and social life, all rooted in that inmost characteristic of Christian morals, self-surrender, self-submission to God. Loyalty to others in the Lord has been the theme. In the circles of home, of friendship, of the Church; in the open field of intercourse with men in general, whose personal enmity or religious persecution was so likely to cross the path—in all these regions the Christian was to act on the principle of supernatural submission, as the sure way to spiritual victory.

The same principle is now carried into his relations with the State. As a Christian, he does not cease to be a citizen, to be a subject. His deliverance from the death-sentence of the Law of God only binds him, in his Lord's name, to a loyal fidelity to human statute; limited only by the case where such statute may really contradict the supreme divine law. The disciple of Christ, as such, while his whole being has received an emancipation unknown elsewhere, is to be the faithful

subject of the Emperor, the orderly inhabitant of his quarter in the City, the punctual taxpayer, the ready giver of not a servile yet a genuine deference to the representatives and ministers of human authority.

This is he to do for reasons both general and special. In general, it is his Christian duty rather to submit than otherwise, where conscience toward God is not in the question. Not weakly, but meekly, he is to yield rather than resist in all his intercourse, purely personal, with men; and therefore with the officials of order, as men. But in particular also, he is to understand that civil order is not only a desirable thing, but divine; it is the will of God for the social Race made in His Image. In the abstract, this is absolutely so; civil order is a God-given law, as truly as the most explicit precepts of the Decalogue, in whose Second Table it is so plainly implied all along. And in the concrete, the civil order under which the Christian finds himself to be is to be regarded as a real instance of this great principle. It is quite sure to be imperfect, because it is necessarily mediated through human minds and wills. Very possibly it may be gravely distorted, into a system seriously oppressive of the individual life. As a fact, the supreme magistrate for the Roman Christians in the year 58 was a dissolute young man, intoxicated by the discovery that he might do almost entirely as he pleased with the lives around him; by no defect however in the idea and purpose of Roman law, but by fault of the degenerate world of the day. Yet civil authority, even with a Nero at its head, was still in principle a thing divine. And the Christian's attitude to it was to be always that of a willingness, a purpose, to obey; an absence of the resistance whose motive lies in self-

assertion. Most assuredly his attitude was not to be that of the revolutionist, who looks upon the State as a sort of belligerent power, against which he, alone or in company, openly or in the dark, is free to carry on a campaign. Under even heavy pressure the Christian is still to remember that civil government is, in its principle, "of God." He is to reverence the Institution in its idea. He is to regard its actual officers, whatever their personal faults, as so far dignified by the Institution that their governing work is to be considered always first in the light of the Institution. The most imperfect, even the most erring, administration of civil order is still a thing to be respected before it is criticized. In its principle, it is a "*terror not to good works, but to the evil.*"

It hardly needs elaborate remark to shew that such a precept, little as it may accord with many popular political cries of our time, means anything in the Christian but a political servility, or an indifference on his part to political wrong in the actual course of government. The religion which invites every man to stand face to face with God in Christ, to go straight to the Eternal, knowing no intermediary but His Son, and no ultimate authority but His Scripture, for the certainties of the soul, for peace of conscience, for dominion over evil in himself and in the world, and for more than deliverance from the fear of death, is no friend to the tyrants of mankind. We have seen how, by enthroning Christ in the heart, it inculcates a noble inward submissiveness. But from another point of view it equally, and mightily, develops the noblest sort of individualism. It lifts man to a sublime independence of his surroundings, by joining him direct to God in Christ, by making him the Friend of God. No wonder then that, in the course of history,

Christianity, that is to say the Christianity of the Apostles, of the Scriptures, has been the invincible ally of personal conscience and political liberty, the liberty which is the opposite alike of licence and of tyranny. It is Christianity which has taught men calmly to die, in face of a persecuting Empire, or of whatever other giant human force, rather than do wrong at its bidding. It is Christianity which has lifted innumerable souls to stand upright in solitary protest for truth and against falsehood, when every form of governmental authority has been against them. It was the student of St Paul who, alone before the great Diet, uttering no denunciation, temperate and respectful in his whole bearing, was yet found immovable by Pope and Emperor: "*I can not otherwise; so help me God.*" We may be sure that if the world shuts the Bible it will only the sooner revert, under whatever type of government, to essential despotism, whether it be the despotism of the master, or that of the man. The "individual" indeed will "wither." The Autocrat will find no purely independent spirits in his path. And what then shall call itself, however loudly, "Liberty, Fraternity, Equality," will be found at last, where the Bible is unknown, to be the remorseless despot of the personality, and of the home.

It is Christianity which has peacefully and securely freed the slave, and has restored woman to her true place by the side of man. But then, Christianity has done all this in a way of its own. It has never flattered the oppressed, nor inflamed them. It has told impartial truth to them, and to their oppressors. One of the least hopeful phenomena of present political life is the adulation (it cannot be called by another name) too frequently offered to the working classes by

their leaders, or by those who ask their suffrages. A flattery as gross as any ever accepted by complacent monarchs is almost all that is now heard about themselves by the new master-section of the State. This is not Christianity, but its parody. The Gospel tells uncompromising truth to the rich, but also to the poor. Even in the presence of pagan slavery it laid the law of duty on the slave, as well as on his master. It bade the slave consider his obligations rather than his rights; while it said the same, precisely, and more at length, and more urgently, to his lord. So it at once avoided revolution and sowed the living seed of immense, and salutary, and ever-developing reforms. The doctrine of spiritual equality, and spiritual connexion, secured in Christ, came into the world as the guarantee for the whole social and political system of the truest ultimate political liberty. For it equally chastened and developed the individual, in relation to the life around him.

Serious questions for practical casuistry may be raised, of course, from this passage. Is resistance to a cruel despotism never permissible to the Christian? In a time of revolution, when power wrestles with power, which power is the Christian to regard as "*ordained of God*"? It may be sufficient to reply to the former question that, almost self-evidently, the absolute principles of a passage like this take for granted some balance and modification by concurrent principles. Read without any such reserve, St Paul leaves here no alternative, under any circumstances, to submission. But he certainly did not mean to say that the Christian must submit to an imperial order to sacrifice to the Roman gods. It seems to follow that the letter of the precept does not pronounce it inconceivable that

a Christian, under circumstances which leave his action unselfish, truthful, the issue not of impatience but of conviction, might be justified in positive resistance; such resistance as was offered to oppression by the Huguenots of the Cevennes, and by the Alpine Vaudois before them. But history adds its witness to the warnings of St Paul, and of his Master, that almost inevitably it goes ill in the highest respects with saints who "take the sword," and that the purest victories for freedom are won by those who "endure grief, suffering wrongfully," while they witness for right and Christ before their oppressors. The Protestant pastors of Southern France won a nobler victory than any won by Jean Cavalier in the field of battle when, at the risk of their lives, they met in the woods to draw up a solemn document of loyalty to Louis XV.; informing him that their injunction to their flocks always was, and always would be, "*Fear God, honour the King.*"

Meanwhile Godet, in some admirable notes on this passage, remarks that it leaves the Christian not only not bound to aid an oppressive government by active co-operation, but amply free to witness aloud against its wrong; and that his "submissive but firm conduct is itself a homage to the inviolability of authority. Experience proves that it is in this way all tyrannies have been morally broken, and all true progress in the history of humanity effected."

What the servant of God should do with his allegiance at a revolutionary crisis is a grave question for any whom it may unhappily concern. Thomas Scott, in a useful note on our passage, remarks that "perhaps nothing involves greater difficulties, in very many instances, than to ascertain to whom the authority *justly* belongs. . . . Submission in all things lawful to 'the

existing authorities' is our duty at all times and in all cases; though in civil convulsions . . . there may frequently be a difficulty in determining which are 'the existing authorities.'" In such cases "the Christian," says Godet, "will submit to the new power as soon as the resistance of the old shall have ceased. In the actual state of matters he will recognize the manifestation of God's will, and will take no part in any reactionary plot."

As regards the problem of forms or types of government, it seems clear that the Apostle lays no bond *of conscience* on the Christian. Both in the Old Testament and in the New a just monarchy appears to be the ideal. But our Epistle says that "there is *no power* but of God." In St Paul's time the Roman Empire was in theory, as much as ever, a republic, and in fact a personal monarchy. In this question, as in so many others of the outward framework of human life, the Gospel is liberal in its applications, while it is, in the noblest sense, conservative in principle.

We close our preparatory comments, and proceed to the text, with the general recollection that in this brief paragraph we see and touch as it were the corner-stone of civil order. One side of the angle is the indefeasible duty, for the Christian citizen, of reverence for law, of remembrance of the religious aspect of even secular government. The other side is the memento to the ruler, to the authority, that God throws His shield over the claims of the State only because authority was instituted not for selfish but for social ends, so that it belies itself if it is not used for the good of man.

Ver. 1. **Let every soul,** every person, who has "presented his body a living sacrifice," **be submissive to the ruling authorities;** manifestly, from the context,

the authorities of the State. **For there is no authority except by God** *; **but the existing authorities have been appointed by God.** That is, the *imperium* of the King Eternal is absolutely reserved; an authority not sanctioned by Him is nothing; man is no independent source of power and law. But then, it has pleased God so to order human life and history, that His will in this matter is expressed, from time to time, in and through the actual constitution of the state. Ver. 2. **So that the opponent of the authority withstands the ordinance of God,** not merely that of man; **but the withstanders will on themselves bring sentence of judgment;** not only the human crime of treason, but the charge, in the court of God, of rebellion against His will. This is founded on the idea of law and order, which means by its nature the restraint of public mischief and the promotion, or at least protection, of public good. "Authority," even under its worst distortions, still so far keeps that aim that no human civic power, as a fact, punishes good as good, and rewards evil as evil; and thus for the common run of lives the worst settled authority is infinitely better than real anarchy. Ver. 3. **For rulers, as a class** (*οἱ ἄρχοντες*), **are not a terror to the good deed, but to the evil;** such is always the fact in principle, and such, taking human life as a whole, is the tendency, even at the worst, in practice, where the authority in any degree deserves its name. **Now do you wish not to be afraid of the authority? do what is good, and you shall have praise from it;** the "*praise*," at least, of being unmolested and protected. Ver. 4. **For God's agent** (*διάκονος*) **he is to you, for what is good;** through his function God, in providence, carries out

* Read *ὑπὸ* not *ἀπό*.

His purposes of order. **But if you are doing what is evil, be afraid; for not for nothing** (εἰκῇ), not without warrant, nor without purpose, **does he wear his** (τὴν) **sword**, symbol of the ultimate power of life and death; **for**

Ver. 5. **God's agent is he, an avenger, unto wrath, for the practiser of the evil. Wherefore**, because God is in the matter, **it is a necessity to submit, not only because of the wrath**, the ruler's wrath in the case supposed, **but because of the conscience too**; because you know, as a Christian, that God speaks through the state and through its minister, and that anarchy is therefore

Ver. 6. disloyalty to Him. **For on this account too you pay taxes**; the same commission which gives the state the right to restrain and punish gives it the right to demand subsidy from its members, in order to its operations; **for God's ministers are they**, His λειτουργοί, a word so frequently used in sacerdotal connexions that it well may suggest them here; as if the civil ruler were, in his province, an almost religious instrument of divine order; **God's ministers, to this very end persevering** in their task; working on in the toils of administration, for the execution, consciously or not, of the divine plan of social peace.

This is a noble point of view, alike for governed and for governors, from which to consider the prosaic problems and necessities of public finance. Thus understood, the tax is paid not with a cold and compulsory assent to a mechanical exaction, but as an act in the line of the plan of God. And the tax is devised and demanded, not merely as an expedient to adjust a budget, but as a thing which God's law can sanction,

Ver. 7. in the interests of God's social plan. **Discharge therefore to all men**, to all men in authority, primarily, but not only, **their dues; the tax, to whom**

you owe **the tax**, on person and property; **the toll, to whom the toll**, on merchandise; **the fear, to whom the fear**, as to the ordained punisher of wrong; **the honour, to whom the honour**, as to the rightful claimant in general of loyal deference.

Such were the political principles of the new Faith, of the mysterious Society, which was so soon to perplex the Roman statesman, as well as to supply convenient victims to the Roman despot. A Nero was shortly to burn Christians in his gardens as a substitute for lamps, on the charge that they were guilty of secret and horrible orgies. Later, a Trajan, grave and anxious, was to order their execution as members of a secret community dangerous to imperial order. But here is a private missive sent to this people by their leader, reminding them of their principles, and prescribing their line of action. He puts them in immediate spiritual contact, every man and woman of them, with the Eternal Sovereign, and so he inspires them with the strongest possible independence, as regards "the fear of man." He bids them know, for a certainty, that the Almighty One regards them, each and all, as accepted in His Beloved, and fills them with His great Presence, and promises them a coming heaven from which no earthly power or terror can for a moment shut them out. But in the same message, and in the same Name, he commands them to pay their taxes to the pagan State, and to do so, not with the contemptuous indifference of the fanatic, who thinks that human life in its temporal order is God-forsaken, but in the spirit of cordial loyalty and ungrudging deference, as to an authority representing in its sphere none other than their Lord and Father.

It has been suggested that the first serious antagonism

of the state towards these mysterious Christians was occasioned by the inevitable interference of the claims of Christ with the stern and rigid order of the Roman Family. A power which could assert the right, the duty, of a son to reject his father's religious worship was taken to be a power which meant the destruction of all social order as such; a *nihilism* indeed. This was a tremendous misunderstanding to encounter. How was it to be met? Not by tumultuary resistance, not even by passionate protests and invectives. The answer was to be that of love, practical and loyal, to God and man, in life and, when occasion came, in death.* Upon the line of that path lay at least the possibility of martyrdom, with its lions and its funeral piles; but the end of it was the peaceful vindication of the glory of God and of the Name of Jesus, and the achievement of the best security for the liberties of man.

Congenially then the Apostle closes these precepts of civil order with the universal command to love. **Owe**

Ver. 8. **nothing to anyone**; avoid absolutely the social disloyalty of debt; pay every creditor in full, with watchful care; **except the loving one another.** Love is to be a perpetual and inexhaustible debt, not as if repudiated or neglected, but as always due and always paying; a debt, not as a forgotten account is owing to the seller, but as interest on capital is continuously owing to the lender. And this, not only because of the fair beauty of love, but because of the legal duty of it: **For the lover of his fellow** (τὸν ἕτερον, "*the other man*," be he who he may, with whom the man has to do) **has fulfilled the law**, the law of the Second Table, the code

* "To believe, to suffer, and to love, was the primitive taste" (Milner).

of man's duty to man, which is in question here. He "*has* fulfilled" it; as having at once entered, in principle and will, into its whole requirement; so that all he now needs is not a better attitude but developed information.

Ver. 9. **For the, "Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not murder, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,* Thou shalt not covet," and whatever other commandment there is, all is summed up in this utterance, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as**

Ver. 10. **thyself"** (Lev. xix. 18). **Love works the neighbour no ill; therefore love is the Law's fulfilment.**

Is it a mere negative precept then? Is the life of love to be only an abstinence from doing harm, which may shun thefts, but may also shun personal sacrifices? Is it a cold and inoperative "harmlessness," which leaves all things as they are? We see the answer in part in those words, "*as thyself*." Man "loves *himself*," (in the sense of nature, not of sin,) with a love which instinctively avoids indeed what is repulsive and noxious, but does so because it positively likes and desires the opposite. The man who "loves his neighbour *as himself*" will be as considerate of his neighbour's feelings as of his own, in respect of abstinence from injury and annoyance. But he will be more; he will be actively desirous of his neighbour's good. "*Working him no evil*," he will reckon it as much "*evil*" to be indifferent to his positive true interests as he would reckon it unnatural to be apathetic about his own. "*Working him no evil*," as one who "*loves him as himself*," he will care, and seek, to work him good.

"Love," says Leibnitz, in reference to the great controversy on Pure Love agitated by Fénelon and

* This clause is perhaps to be omitted here.

Bossuet, "is that which finds its felicity in another's good."* Such an agent can never terminate its action in a mere cautious abstinence from wrong.

The true divine commentary on this brief paragraph is the nearly contemporary passage written by the same author, 1 Cor. xiii. There, as we saw above, the description of the sacred thing, love, like that of the heavenly state in the Revelation, is given largely in negatives. Yet who fails to feel the wonderful *positive* of the effect? That is no merely negative innocence which is greater than mysteries, and knowledge, and the use of an angel tongue; greater than self-inflicted poverty, and the endurance of the martyr's flame; "chief grace below, and all in all above." Its blessed negatives are but a form of unselfish *action*. It forgets itself, and remembers others, and refrains from the least needless wounding of them, not because it wants merely "to live and let live," but because it loves them, finding its felicity in their good.

It has been said that "love is holiness, spelt short." Thoughtfully interpreted and applied, the saying is true. The holy man in human life is the man who, with the Scriptures open before him as his informant and his guide, while the Lord Christ dwells in his heart by faith as his Reason and his Power, forgets himself in a work for others which is kept at once gentle, wise, and persistent to the end, by the love which, whatever else it does, knows how to sympathize and to serve.

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* See Card. Bausset, *Vie de Fénelon*, ii. 375. Leibnitz, in a letter to T. Burnet, quotes the words from a work of his own; *Amare est felicitate alterius delectari.*

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### *CHRISTIAN DUTY IN THE LIGHT OF THE LORD'S RETURN AND IN THE POWER OF HIS PRESENCE*

ROMANS xiii. 11-14

THE great teacher has led us long upon the path of duty, in its patient details, all summed up in the duty and joy of love. We have heard him explaining to his disciples how to live as members together of the Body of Christ, and as members also of human society at large, and as citizens of the state. We have been busy latterly with thoughts of taxes, and tolls, and private debts, and the obligation of scrupulous rightfulness in all such things. Everything has had relation to the seen and the temporal. The teaching has not strayed into a land of dreams, nor into a desert and a cell; it has had at least as much to do with the market, and the shop, and the secular official, as if the writer had been a moralist whose horizon was altogether of this life, and who for the future was "without hope."

Yet all the while the teacher and the taught were penetrated and vivified by a certainty of the future perfectly supernatural, and commanding the wonder and glad response of their whole being. They carried about with them the promise of their Risen Master that He would personally return again in heavenly glory, to their infinite joy, gathering them for ever

around Him in immortality, bringing heaven with Him, and transfiguring them into His own celestial Image.

Across all possible complications and obstacles of the human world around them they beheld "that blissful hope" (Tit. ii. 13). The smoke of Rome could not becloud it, nor her noise drown the music of its promise, nor her splendour of possessions make its golden vista less beautiful and less entrancing to their souls.* Their Lord, once crucified, but now alive for evermore, was greater than the world; greater in His calm triumphant authority over man and nature, greater in the wonder and joy of Himself, His Person and His Salvation. It was enough that He had said He would come again, and that it would be to their eternal happiness. He had promised; therefore it would surely be.

How the promise would take place, and when, was a secondary question. Some things were revealed and certain, as to the manner; "*This same Jesus, in like manner as ye saw Him going into heaven*" (Acts i. 11). But vastly more was unrevealed and even unconjectured. As to the time, His words had left them, as they still leave us, suspended in a reverent sense of mystery, between intimations which seem almost equally to promise both speed and delay. "Watch therefore, for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh" (Mark xiii. 35); "After a long time the Lord of the servants cometh, and reckoneth with them" (Matt. xxv. 19). The Apostle himself follows his Redeemer's example in the matter. Here and there he seems to indicate an Advent at the doors, as when he speaks of "*us* who are alive and remain" (1 Thess. iv. 15). But

* Omitte mirari beatæ
Fumum et opes strepitumque Romæ. (Horace.)

again, in this very Epistle, in his discourse on the future of Israel, he appears to contemplate great developments of time and event yet to come; and very definitely, for his own part, in many places, he records his expectation of death, not of a death-less transfiguration at the Coming. Many at least among his converts looked with an eagerness which was sometimes restless and unwholesome, as at Thessalonica, for the coming King; and it may have been thus with some of the Roman saints. But St Paul at once warned the Thessalonians of their mistake; and certainly this Epistle *suggests* no such upheaval of expectation at Rome.

Our work in these pages is not to discuss "the times and the seasons" which now, as much as then, lie in the Father's "power" (Acts i. 7). It is rather to call attention to the fact that in all ages of the Church this mysterious but definite Promise has, with a silent force, made itself as it were present and contemporary to the believing and watching soul. How at last it shall be seen that "*I come quickly*," and, "*The day of Christ is not at hand*" (Rev. xxii. 12, 20, 2 Thess. ii. 2), were both divinely and harmoniously truthful, it does not yet fully appear. But it is certain that both are so; and that in every generation of the now "long time" "the Hope," as if it were at the doors indeed, has been calculated for mighty effects on the Christian's will and work.

So we come to this great Advent oracle, to read it for our own age. Now first let us remember its wonderful illustration of that phenomenon which we have remarked already, the concurrence in Christianity of a faith full of eternity, with a life full of common duty. Here is a community of men called to live under an almost opened heaven; almost to see, as they look

around them, the descending Lord of glory coming to bring in the eternal day, making Himself present in this visible scene "with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God," waking His buried saints from the dust, calling the living and the risen to meet Him in the air. How can they adjust such an expectation to the demands of "the daily round"? Will they not fly from the City to the solitude, to the hill-tops and forests of the Apennines, to wait with awful joy the great lightning-flash of glory? Not so. They somehow, while "looking for the Saviour from the heavens" (Phil. iii. 20), attend to their service and their business, pay their debts and their taxes, offer sympathy to their neighbours in their human sadnesses and joys, and yield honest loyalty to the magistrate and the Prince. They are the most stable of all elements in the civic life of the hour, if "the powers that be" would but understand them; while yet, all the while, they are the only people in the City whose home, consciously, is the eternal heavens. What can explain the paradox? Nothing but the Fact, the Person, the Character of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not an enthusiasm, however powerful, which governs them, but a Person. And He is at once the Lord of immortality and the Ruler of every detail of His servant's life. He is no author of fanaticism, but the divine-human King of truth and order. To know Him is to find the secret alike of a life eternal and of a patient faithfulness in the life that now is.

What was true of Him is true for evermore. His servant now, in this restless close of the nineteenth age, is to find in Him this wonderful double secret still. He is to be, in Christ, by the very nature of his faith, the most practical and the most willing of the servants

of his fellow-men, in their mortal as well as immortal interests; while also disengaged internally from a bondage to the seen and temporal by his mysterious union with the Son of God, and by his firm expectation of His Return. **And this**, this law of love and duty, let us remember, let us follow, **knowing the season**, the occasion, the growing crisis (*καιρόν*); **that it is already the hour for our awaking out of sleep**, the sleep of moral inattention, as if the eternal Master were not near. **For nearer now is our salvation**, in that last glorious sense of the word "*salvation*" which means the immortal issue of the whole saving process, nearer now **than when we believed**, and so by faith entered on our union with the Saviour. (See how he delights to associate himself with his disciples in the blessed unity of remembered conversion; "when *we* believed.") **The night**, with its murky silence, its "poring dark," the night of trial, of temptation, of the absence of our Christ, **is far spent**,* **but the day has drawn near**; it has been a long night, *but* that means a near dawn; the everlasting sunrise of the longed-for *Parousia*, with its glory, gladness, and unveiling. **Let us put off therefore**, as if they were a foul and entangling night-robe, **the works of the darkness**, the habits and acts of the moral night, things which *we can* throw off in the Name of Christ; **but let us put on the weapons of the light**, arming ourselves, for defence, and for holy aggression on the realm of evil, with faith, love, and the heavenly hope. So to the Thessalonians five years before (1, v. 8), and to the Ephesians four years later (vi. 11-17), he wrote of

Ver. 11.

Ver. 12.

* Προέκοψε: literally, "*made progress.*" The aorist may refer to the event of the First Advent, when our eternal Sun was heralded by Himself the Morning Star. But perhaps it is best represented by the English perfect, as in the A.V. and above.

the holy Panoply, rapidly sketching it in the one place, giving the rich finished picture in the other; suggesting to the saints always the thought of a warfare first and mainly defensive, and *then* aggressive with the drawn sword, and indicating as their true armour not their reason, their emotions, or their will, taken in themselves, but the eternal facts of their revealed salvation in Christ, grasped and used by faith. **As by day,** for it is already dawn, in the Lord, **let us walk* decorously,** becomingly, as we are the hallowed soldiers of our Leader; let our life not only be right in fact; let it *shew* to all men the open "*decorum*" of truth, purity, peace, and love; **not in revels and drunken bouts; not in chamberings,** the sins of the secret couch, **and profligacies,** not—to name evils which cling often to the otherwise reputable Christian—**in strife and envy,** things which are pollutions, in the sight of the Holy One, as real as lust itself. **No; put on,** clothe and arm yourselves with, **the Lord Jesus Christ,** Himself the living sum and true meaning of all that can arm the soul; **and for the flesh take no forethought lust-ward.** As if, in euphemism, he would say, "Take all possible *forethought against* the life of self (*σάρξ*), with its lustful, self-wilful gravitation away from God. And let that forethought be, to arm yourselves, as if never armed before, with Christ."

Ver. 13.

How solemnly explicit he is, how plain-spoken, about the temptations of the Roman Christian's life! The men who were capable of the appeals and revelations of the first eight chapters yet needed to be told not to drink to intoxication, not to go near the house of ill-fame, not to quarrel, not to grudge. But every modern missionary

* Περιπατήσωμεν: perhaps the aorist suggests a new outset in the "*walk*."

in heathendom will tell us that the like stern plainness is needed now among the new-converted faithful. And is it not needed among those who have professed the Pauline faith much longer, in the congregations of our older Christendom?

It remains for our time, as truly as ever, a fact of religious life—this necessity to press it home upon the religious, *as* the religious, that they are called to a practical and detailed holiness; and that they are never to ignore the possibility of even the worst falls. So mysteriously can the subtle "flesh," in the believing receiver of the Gospel, becloud or distort the holy import of the thing received. So fatally easy is it "to corrupt the best into the worst," using the very depth and richness of spiritual truth as if it could be a substitute for patient practice, instead of its mighty stimulus.

But glorious is the method illustrated here for triumphant resistance to that tendency. What is it? It is not to retreat from spiritual principle upon a cold naturalistic programme of activity and probity. It is to penetrate through the spiritual principle to the Crucified and Living Lord who is its heart and power; it is to bury self in Him, and to arm the will with Him. It is to look for Him as Coming, but also, and yet more urgently, to use Him as Present. In the great Roman Epic, on the verge of the decisive conflict, the goddess-mother laid the invulnerable panoply at the feet of her Æneas; and the astonished Champion straightway, first pondering every part of the heaven-sent armament, then "put it on," and was prepared. As it were at our feet is laid THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, in all He is, in all He has done, in His indissoluble union with us in it all, as we are one with Him by the Holy Ghost. It is for us to see in Him our power and victory, and to "put Him on," in a

personal act which, while all by grace, is yet in itself our own. And how is this done? It is by the "committal of the keeping of our souls unto Him" (1 Pet. iv. 19), not vaguely, but definitely and with purpose, in view of each and every temptation. It is by "living our life in the flesh by faith in the Son of God" (Gal. ii. 20); that is to say, in effect, by perpetually *making use of* the Crucified and Living Saviour, One with us by the Holy Spirit; by using Him as our living Deliverer, our Peace and Power, amidst *all* that the dark hosts of evil can do against us.

Oh wonderful and all-adequate secret; "Christ, which is the Secret of God" (Col. ii. 2)! Oh divine simplicity of its depth;

"Heaven's easy, artless, unencumber'd plan"!

Not that its "ease" means our indolence. No; if we would indeed "arm ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ" we must awake and be astir to "*know whom* we have trusted" (2 Tim. i. 12). We must explore His Word about Himself. We must ponder it, above all in the prayer which converses with Him over His promises, till they live to us in His light. We must watch and pray, that we may be alert to employ our armament. The Christian who steps out into life "light-heartedly," thinking superficially of his weakness, and of his foes, is only too likely also to think of his Lord superficially, and to find of even this heavenly armour that "he cannot *go* with it, for he hath not proved it" (1 Sam. xvii. 39). But all this leaves absolutely untouched the divine simplicity of the matter. It leaves it wonderfully true that the decisive, the satisfying, *the thorough*, moral victory and deliverance comes to the Christian man not by trampling about with his own

resolves, but by committing himself to his Saviour and Keeper, who has conquered *him*, that now He may conquer "his strong Enemy" for him.

"Heaven's unencumbered plan" of "victory and triumph, against the devil, the world, and the flesh," is no day-dream of romance. It lives, it works in the most open hour of the common world of sin and sorrow. *We have seen* this "putting on of the Lord Jesus Christ" victoriously successful where the most fierce, or the most subtle, forms of temptation were to be dealt with. *We have seen* it preserving, with beautiful persistency, a life-long sufferer from the terrible solicitations of pain, and of still less endurable helplessness—every limb fixed literally immovable by paralysis on the ill-furnished bed; *we have seen* the man cheerful, restful, always ready for wise word and sympathetic thought, and affirming that his Lord, present to his soul, was infinitely enough to "keep him." *We have seen* the overwhelmed toiler for God, while every step through the day was clogged by "thronging duties," such duties as most wear and drain the spirit, yet maintained in an equable cheerfulness and as it were inward leisure by this same always adequate secret, "the Lord Jesus Christ put on." *We have known* the missionary who had, in sober earnest, hazarded his life for the blessed Name, yet ready to bear quiet witness to the repose and readiness to be found in meeting disappointment, solitude, danger, not so much by a stern resistance as by the use, then and there, confidingly, and in surrender, of the Crucified and Living Lord. Shall we dare to add, with the humiliated avowal that only a too partial proof has been made of this glorious open Secret, that *we know* by experiment that the weakest of the servants of our King, "putting on HIM,"

find victory and deliverance, where there was defeat before?

Let us, writer and reader, address ourselves afresh in practice to this wonderful secret. Let us, as if we had never done it before, "put on the Lord Jesus Christ."* Vain is our interpretation of the holy Word, which not only "abideth, but *liveth* for ever" (1 Pet. i. 23), if it does not somehow *come home*. For that Word was written on purpose to come home; to touch and move the conscience and the will, in the realities of our inmost, and also of our most outward, life. Never for one moment do we stand as merely interested students and spectators, outside the field of temptation. Never for one moment therefore can we dispense with the great Secret of victory and safety.

Full in face of the realities of sin—of Roman sin, in Nero's days; but let us just now forget Rome and Nero; they were only dark accidents of a darker essence—St Paul here writes down, across them all, these words, this spell, this Name; "*Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.*" Take first a steady look, he seems to say, at your sore need, in the light of God; but then, at once, look off, look *here*. Here is the more than Antithesis to it all. Here is that by which you can be "more than conqueror." Take your iniquities at the worst; this can subdue them. Take your surroundings at the worst; this can emancipate you from their power. It is "the Lord Jesus Christ," and the "putting on" of Him.

Let us remember, as if it were a new thing, that He,

* From this point to the close of the chapter the writer has used, with modifications, passages from a Sermon (No. iii.) in his volume entitled *Christ is All.*

the Christ of Prophets, Evangelists, and Apostles, is a Fact. Sure as the existence now of His universal Church, as the observance of the historic Sacrament of His Death, as the impossibility of Galilean or Pharisaic imagination having *composed*, instead of *photographed*, the portrait of the Incarnate Son, the Immaculate Lamb; sure as is the glad verification in ten thousand blessed lives to-day of all, of all, that the Christ of Scripture undertakes to be to the soul that will take Him at His own terms—so sure, across all oldest and all newest doubts, across all *gnosis* and all *agnosia*, lies the present Fact of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then let us remember that it is a fact that man, in the mercy of God, *can* "put Him on." He is not far off. He presents Himself to our touch, our possession. He says to us, "Come to Me." He unveils Himself as literal partaker of our nature; as our Sacrifice; our Righteousness, "through faith in His blood"; as the Head and Life-spring, in an indescribable union, of a deep calm tide of life spiritual and eternal, ready to circulate through our being. He invites Himself to "make His abode *with* us" (John xiv. 23); yea more, "I will come *in* to him; I will dwell *in* his heart by faith" (Rev. iii. 20; Eph. iii. 17). In that ungovernable heart of ours, that interminably self-deceptive heart (Jerem. xvii. 9), He engages to reside, to be permanent Occupant, the Master always at home. He is prepared thus to take, with regard to our will, a place of power nearer than all circumstances, and deep in the midst of all possible inward traitors; to keep His eye on their plots, His foot, not ours, upon their necks. Yes, He invites us thus to embrace Him into a full contact; to "put Him on."

May we not say of Him what the great Poet says of Duty, and glorify the verse by a yet nobler application?—

> "Thou who art victory and law
> When empty terrors overawe,
> From vain temptations dost set free,
> And calm'st the weary strife of frail humanity!"

Yes, we can "put Him on" as our "Panoply of Light." We can put Him on as "THE LORD," surrendering ourselves to His absolute while most benignant sovereignty and will, deep secret of repose. We can put Him on as "JESUS," clasping the truth that He, our Human Brother, yet Divine, "saves His people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21). We can put Him on as "CHRIST," our Head, anointed without measure by the Eternal Spirit, and now sending of that same Spirit into His happy members, so that we are indeed one with Him, and receive into our whole being the resources of His life.

Such is the armour and the arms. St Jerome, commenting on a kindred passage (Eph. vi. 13), says that "it most clearly results that by 'the weapons of God' *the Lord our Saviour* is to be understood."

We may recollect that this text is memorable in connexion with the Conversion of St Augustine. In his *Confessions* (viii. 12) he records how, in the garden at Milan, at a time of great moral conflict, he was strangely attracted by a voice, perhaps the cry of children playing: "*Take and read, take and read.*" He fetched and opened again a copy of the Epistles (*codicem Apostoli*), which he had lately laid down. "I read in silence the first place on which my eyes fell; '*Not in revelling and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ,*

*and make no provision for the flesh in its lusts.*' I neither cared, nor needed, to read further. At the close of the sentence, as if a ray of certainty were poured into my heart, the clouds of hesitation fled at once." His will was in the will of God.

Alas, there falls one shadow over that fair scene. In the belief of Augustine's time, to decide fully for Christ meant, or very nearly meant, so to accept the ascetic idea as to renounce the Christian home. But the Lord read His servant's heart aright through the error, and filled it with His peace. To us, in a surrounding religious light far clearer, in many things, than that which shone even upon Ambrose and Augustine; to us who quite recognize that in the paths of homeliest duty and commonest temptation lies the line along which the blessed power of the Saviour may best overshadow His disciple; the Spirit's voice shall say of this same text, "*Take and read, take and read.*" We will "put on," never to put off. Then we shall step out upon the old path in a strength new, and to be renewed for ever, armed against evil, armed for the will of God, with Jesus Christ our Lord.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### *CHRISTIAN DUTY: MUTUAL TENDERNESS AND TOLERANCE: THE SACREDNESS OF EXAMPLE*

ROMANS xiv. 1-23

Ver. 1. **But him who is weak**—we might almost render, **him who suffers from weakness** (*τὸν ἀσθενοῦντα*), **in his** (*τῇ*) **faith** (in the sense here not of creed, a meaning of *πίστις* rare in St Paul, but of reliance on his Lord; reliance not only for justification but, in this case, for holy liberty), **welcome into fellowship—not for criticisms of his scruples,** of his *διαλογισμοί*, the anxious internal debates of conscience. Ver. 2. **One man believes,** has faith, issuing in a conviction of liberty, in such a mode and degree as **to eat all kinds of food; but the man in weakness eats vegetables** only; an extreme case, but doubtless not uncommon, where a convert, tired out by his own scruples between food and food, cut the knot by rejecting flesh-meat altogether. **The eater—** Ver. 3. **let him not despise the non-eater*; while the non-eater—let him not judge the eater; for our** (*ὁ*) **God welcomed him to fellowship,** when he came to the feet of His Son for acceptance. Ver. 4. **You—who are you, thus judging Another's domestic** (*οἰκέτην*)**? To his own Lord,** his own Master, **he stands,** in approval,—

* *Τὸν μὴ* (not *οὐκ*) *ἐσθίοντα*: the *μὴ* gives "non-eating" as not merely a fact, but a *condition*, about the man.

**or,** if that must be, **falls,** under displeasure; **but he shall be upheld** in approval; **for able is that** (ὁ) **Lord*** **to set him** so, to bid him "*stand*," under His sanctioning smile.

Ver. 5. **One man distinguishes** (κρίνει) **day above day; while another distinguishes every day;** a phrase paradoxical but intelligible; it describes the thought of the man who, less anxious than his neighbour about stated "holy-days," still aims not to "level down" but to "level up" his use of time; to count every day "holy," equally dedicated to the will and work of God. **Let each be quite assured in his own mind;** using the thinking-power (νοῦς) given him by his Master, let him reverently work the question out, and then live up to his ascertained convictions, while (this is intimated by the emphatic "*his own* mind") he respects the convictions of his neighbour.

Ver. 6. **The man who 'minds'** (ὁ φρονῶν) **the day,** the "holy-day" in question, in any given instance, **to the Lord he 'minds' it;** [**and the man who 'minds' not the day, to the Lord he does not 'mind' it**]†; both parties, as Christians, in their convictions and their practice, stand related and responsible, directly and primarily, to the Lord; that fact must always govern and qualify their mutual judgments. **And**‡ **the eater,** the man who takes food indifferently without scruple, **to the Lord he eats, for he gives thanks** at his meal **to God; and the non-eater, to the Lord he does not eat** the scrupled food, **and gives thanks to God** for that of which his conscience allows him to partake.

The connexion of the paragraph just traversed with what went before it is suggestive and instructive. There

* Read δυνατεῖ γὰρ ὁ Κύριος.

† Probably the negative limb of ver. 6. is only an explanatory gloss, not the words of the Apostle.

‡ Read καί.

*is* a close connexion between the two; it is marked expressly by the "*but*" (δέ) of ver. 1, a link strangely missed in the Authorized Version. The "but" indicates a difference of thought, however slight, between the two passages. And the difference, as we read it, is this. The close of the thirteenth chapter has gone all in the direction of Christian wakefulness, decision, and the battle-field of conquering faith. The Roman convert, roused by its trumpet-strain, will be eager to be up and doing, against the enemy and for his Lord, armed from head to foot with Christ. He will bend his whole purpose upon a life of open and active holiness. He will be filled with a new sense at once of the seriousness and of the liberty of the Gospel. But then—some "weak brother" will cross his path. It will be some recent convert, perhaps from Judaism itself, perhaps an ex-pagan, but influenced by the Jewish ideas so prevalent at the time in many Roman circles. This Christian, not untrustful, at least in theory, of the Lord alone for pardon and acceptance, is however quite full of scruples which, to the man fully "armed with Christ," may seem, and do seem, lamentably morbid, really serious mistakes and hindrances. The "weak brother" spends much time in studying the traditional rules of fast and feast, and the code of permitted food. He is sure that the God who has accepted him will hide His face from him if he lets the new moon pass like a common day; or if the Sabbath is not kept by the rule, not of Scripture, but of the Rabbis. Every social meal gives him painful and frequent occasion for troubling himself, and others; he takes refuge perhaps in an anxious vegetarianism, in despair of otherwise keeping undefiled. And inevitably such scruples do not terminate in themselves. They infect the man's whole tone of thinking and action. He

questions and discusses everything, with himself, if not with others. He is on the way to let his view of acceptance in Christ grow fainter and more confused. He walks, he lives; but he moves like a man chained, and in a prison.

Such a case as this would be a sore temptation to the "strong" Christian. He would be greatly inclined, of himself, first to make a vigorous protest, and then, if the difficulty proved obstinate, to think hard thoughts of his narrow-minded friend; to doubt his right to the Christian name at all; to reproach him, or (worst of all) to satirize him. Meanwhile the "weak" Christian would have his harsh thoughts too. He would not, by any means for certain, shew as much meekness as "weakness." He would let his neighbour see, in one way or other, that he thought him little better than a worldling, who made Christ an excuse for personal self-indulgence.

How does the Apostle meet the trying case, which must have crossed his own path so often, and sometimes in the form of a bitter opposition from those who were "suffering from weakness in their faith"? It is quite plain that his own convictions lay with "the strong," so far as *principle* was concerned. He "knew that nothing was unclean" (ver. 14). He knew that the Lord was not grieved, but pleased, by the temperate and thankful use, untroubled by morbid fears, of His natural bounties. He knew that the Jewish festival-system had found its goal and end in the perpetual "*let us keep the feast*" (1 Cor. v. 3) of the true believer's happy and hallowed life.* And accordingly he does, in passing, rebuke

* There seems to be a broad and intelligible difference between the Sabbath-keeping *of the Jewish law* and the Sabbath-keeping *of man*; the enjoyment and holy use of the primeval Rest for man and

"the weak" for their harsh criticisms (κρίνειν) of "the strong." But then, he throws all the more weight, the main weight, on his rebukes and warnings to "the strong." Their principle might be right on this great detail. But this left untouched the yet more stringent overruling principle, to "*walk in love*"; to take part against themselves; to live in this matter, as in everything else, for others. They were not to be at all ashamed of their special principles. But they were to be deeply ashamed of one hour's unloving conduct. They were to be quietly convinced, in respect of private judgment. They were to be more than tolerant—they were to be loving—in respect of common life in the Lord.

Their "strength" in Christ was never to be ungentle; never to be "used like a giant." It was to be shewn, first and most, by patience. It was to take the form of the calm, strong readiness to understand another's point of view. It was to appear as reverence for another's conscience, even when the conscience went astray for want of better light.

Let us take this apostolic principle out into modern religious life. There are times when we shall be specially bound to put it carefully in relation to other principles, of course. When St Paul, some months earlier, wrote to Galatia, and had to deal with an error which darkened the whole truth of the sinner's way to God as it lies straight through Christ, he did not say, "Let every man be quite assured in his own mind." He said (i. 8), "If an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel, which is not another, let him be anathema."

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beast. We take it that *that* duty and privilege is not in question here at all. The "weak" Christian was the anxious scholar of the Rabbis, not the man simply loyal to the Decalogue.

The question *there* was, Is Christ all, or is He not? Is faith all, or is it not, for our laying hold of Him? Even in Galatia, he warned the converts of the miserable and fatal mistake of "biting and devouring one another" (v. 15). But he adjured them not to wreck their peace with God upon a fundamental error. *Here*, at Rome, the question was different; it was secondary. It concerned certain details of Christian practice. Was an outworn and exaggerated ceremonialism a part of the will of God, in the justified believer's life? It was not so, as a fact. Yet it was a matter on which the Lord, by His Apostle, rather counselled than commanded. It was not of the foundation. And the always overruling law for the discussion was—the tolerance born of love. Let us in our day remember this, whether our inmost sympathies are with "the strong" or with "the weak." In Jesus Christ, it is possible to realize the ideal of this paragraph even in our divided Christendom. It is possible to be convinced, yet sympathetic. It is possible to see the Lord for ourselves with glorious clearness, yet to understand the practical difficulties felt by others, and to love, and to respect, where there are even great divergences. No man works more for a final spiritual *consensus* than he who, in Christ, so lives.

Incidentally meantime, the Apostle, in this passage which so curbs "the strong," lets fall maxims which for ever protect all that is good and true in that well-worn and often misused phrase, "the right of private judgment." No spiritual despot, no claimant to be the autocratic director of a conscience, could have written those words, "*Let every man be quite certain in his own mind*"; "*Who art thou that judgest Another's domestic?*" Such sentences assert not the right so much as *the duty*, for the individual Christian, of a reverent

"*thinking for himself.*" They maintain a true and noble individualism. And there is a special need just now in the Church to remember, *in its place*, the value of Christian individualism. The idea of the community, the society, is just now so vastly prevalent (doubtless not without the providence of God) in human life, and also in the Church, that an assertion of the individual, which was once disproportionate, is now often necessary, lest the social idea in its turn should be exaggerated into a dangerous mistake. Coherence, mutuality, the truth of the Body and the Members; all this, *in its place*, is not only important but divine. The individual must inevitably lose where individualism is his whole idea. But it is ill for the community, above all for the Church, where in the total the individual tends really to be merged and lost. Alas for the Church where the Church tries to take the individual's place in the knowledge of God, in the love of Christ, in the power of the Spirit. The religious Community must indeed inevitably lose where religious communism is its whole idea. It can be perfectly strong only where individual consciences are tender, and enlightened; where individual souls personally know God in Christ; where individual wills are ready, if the Lord call, to stand alone for known truth even against the religious Society;—if there also the individualism is not self-will, but Christian personal responsibility; if the man "thinks for himself" *on his knees*; if he reverences the individualism of others, and the relations of each to all.

The individualism of Rom. xiv., asserted in an argument full of the deepest secrets of cohesion, is the holy and healthful thing it is because it is *Christian*. It is developed not by the assertion of self, but by individual communion with Christ.

Now he goes on to further and still fuller statements in the same direction :

Ver. 7. **For none of us to himself lives, and none of us to himself dies.** How, and wherefore ? Is it merely that "*we*" live lives always, necessarily, related *to one another* ? He has this in his heart indeed. But he reaches it through the greater, deeper, antecedent truth of our relation *to the Lord.* The Christian is related to his brother-Christian through Christ, not to Christ through his brother, or through the common Organism in which the brethren are "each other's limbs." "*To the Lord,*" with absolute directness, with a perfect and wonderful immediateness, each individual Christian is first related. His life and his death are "to others," but through Him. THE MASTER's claim is eternally first ; for it is based direct upon the redeeming work in which He bought us for Himself.

Ver. 8. **For whether we live, to the Lord we live ; and whether we be dead** (*ἀποθνήσκωμεν*), **to the Lord we are dead ;** in the state of the departed, as before, "relation stands." **Alike therefore whether** (*ἐάν τε οὖν*) **we be dead, or whether we live, the Lord's we are ;** His property, bound first and in everything to His possession.

Ver. 9. **For to this end Christ both died and lived again,* that He might become Lord** (*κυριεύσῃ*, not *κυριεύῃ*) **of us both dead and living.**

Here is the profound truth seen already in earlier passages in the Epistle. We have had it reasoned out, above all in the sixth chapter, in its revelation of the way of Holiness, that our only possible right relations with the Lord are clasped and governed by the fact that to Him we rightly and everlastingly *belong.* There,

* Read *ἀπέθανε καὶ ἀνέζησε.*

however, the thought was more of our surrender under His rights. Here it is of the mighty antecedent fact, under which our most absolute surrender is nothing more than the recognition of His indefeasible claim. What the Apostle says here, in this wonderful passage of mingled doctrine and duty, is that, whether or no *we are owning* our vassalage to Christ, we are nothing if not *de jure* His vassals. He has not only rescued us, but so rescued us as to buy us for His own. We may be true to the fact in our internal attitude; we may be oblivious of it; but we cannot get away from it. It looks us every hour in the face, whether we respond or not. It will still look us in the face through the endless life to come.

For manifestly it is this objective aspect of our "belonging" which is here in point. St. Paul is not reasoning with the "weak" and the "strong" from their experience, from their conscious loyalty to the Lord. Rather, he is calling them to a new realization of what such loyalty should be. It is in order to this that he reminds them of the eternal claim of the Lord, made good in His Death and Resurrection; His claim to be so their Master, individually and altogether, that every thought about one other was to be governed by that claim of His on them all. "The Lord" must always interpose, with a right inalienable. Each Christian is annexed, by all the laws of Heaven, to Him. So each must—not make but *realize* that annexation, in every thought about neighbour and about brother.

The passage invites us meantime to further remark, in another direction. It is one of those utterances which, luminous with light given by their context, shine also with a light of their own, giving us revelations independent of the surrounding matter. Here one such

revelation appears; it affects our knowledge of the Intermediate State.

The Apostle,* four times over in this short paragraph, makes mention of death, and of the dead. "*No one of us dieth to Himself*"; "*Whether we die, we die unto the Lord*"; "*Whether we die, we are the Lord's*"; "*That He might be Lord of the dead.*" And this last sentence, with its mention not of the dying but of the dead, reminds us that the reference in them all is to the Christian's relation to his Lord, not only in the hour of death, but in the state after death. It is not only that Jesus Christ, as the slain One risen, is absolute Disposer of the time and manner of our dying. It is not only that when our death comes we are to accept it as an opportunity for the "glorifying of God" (John xxi. 19; Phil. i. 20) in the sight and in the memory of those who know of it. It is that when we have "passed through death," and come out upon the other side,

> "When we enter yonder regions,
> When we touch the sacred shore,"

our relation to the slain One risen, to Him who, as such, "hath the keys of Hades and of death" (Rev. i. 18), is perfectly continuous and the same. He is our absolute Master, *there* as well as here. And we, by consequence and correlation, are vassals, servants, bondservants to Him, there as well as here.

Here is a truth which, we cannot but think, richly repays the Christian's repeated remembrance and reflection; and that not only in the way of asserting the eternal rights of our blessed Redeemer over us, but in the way of shedding light, and peace, and the sense

* We transcribe here a few paragraphs from the closing pages of our book *Life in Christ and for Christ.*

of reality and expectation, on both the prospect of our own passage into eternity and the thoughts we entertain of the present life of our holy beloved ones who have entered into it before us.

Everything is precious which really assists the soul in such thoughts, and at the same time keeps it fully and practically alive to the realities of faith, patience, and obedience here below, here in the present hour. While the indulgence of unauthorized imagination in that direction is almost always enervating and disturbing to the present action of Scriptural faith, the least help to a solid realization and anticipation, supplied by the Word that cannot lie, is in its nature both hallowing and strengthening. Such a help we have assuredly here.

He who died and rose again is at this hour, in holy might and right, "the Lord" of the blessed dead. Then, the blessed dead are vassals and *servants* of Him who died and rose again. And all our thought of them, as they are now, at this hour, "in those heavenly habitations, where the souls of them that sleep in the Lord Jesus enjoy perpetual rest and felicity," * gains indefinitely in life, in reality, in strength and glory, as we see them, through this narrow but bright "door in heaven" (Rev. v. 1), not resting only but serving also before their Lord, who has bought them for His use, and who holds them in His use quite as truly now as when we had the joy of their presence with us, and He was seen by us living and working in them and through them here.

True it is that the leading and essential character of their present state is rest, as that of their resurrection state will be action. But the two states overflow into each other. In one glorious passage the Apostle

* Visitation of the Sick (Prayer for a Sick Child).

describes the resurrection bliss as also "rest" (2 Thess. i. 7). And here we have it indicated that the heavenly intermediate rest is also service. What the precise nature of that service is we cannot tell. "Our knowledge of that life is small." Most certainly, "in vain our *fancy* strives to paint" its blessedness, both of repose and of occupation. This is part of our normal and God-chosen lot here, which is to "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. v. 7), οὐ διὰ εἴδους, "not by Object seen," not by objects seen. But blessed is the spiritual assistance in such a walk as we recollect, step by step, as we draw nearer to that happy assembly above, that, whatever be the manner and exercise of their holy life, it is life indeed; power, not weakness; service, not inaction. He who died and revived is Lord, not of us only, but of them.

But from this excursion into the sacred Unseen we must return. St Paul is intent now upon the believer's walk of loving large-heartedness in this life, not the next.

Ver. 10. **But you—why do you judge your brother?** (he takes up the verb, κρίνειν, used in his former appeal to the "weak," ver. 3). **Or you too** (he turns to the "strong"; see again ver. 3)—**why do you despise your brother? For we shall stand, all** of us, on one level, whatever were our mutual sentiments on earth, whatever claim we made here to sit as judges on our brethren, **before the tribunal** (βῆμα) **of our** (τοῦ) **God.***

Ver. 11. **For it stands written** (Isai. xlv. 23), "**As I live, saith the Lord,** sure it is as My eternal Being, **that to Me,** not to another, **shall bend every knee; and**

* So read, not τοῦ Χριστοῦ. It is significant meantime, as a testimony to the Apostle's view of his Master's Nature, that in 2 Cor. v. 10, a perfectly parallel passage, he writes, "we must all appear before the tribunal *of Christ*."

**every tongue shall confess,** shall ascribe all sovereignty, **to God,**" not to the creature. **So then each of us,**
Ver. 12. **about himself,** not about the faults or errors of his brother, **shall give account to God.**

We have here, as in 2 Cor. v. 10, and again, under other imagery, in 1 Cor. iii. 11-15, a glimpse of that heart-searching prospect for the Christian, his summons hereafter, *as a Christian,* to the tribunal of his Lord. In all the three passages, and now particularly in this, the language, though it lends itself freely to the universal Assize, is limited by context, as to its direct purport, to the Master's *scrutiny of His own servants as such.* The question to be tried and decided (speaking after the manner of men) at His "tribunal," in this reference, is not that of glory or perdition; the persons of the examined are accepted; the enquiry is in the *domestic* court of the Palace, so to speak; it regards the award of the King as to the issues and value of His accepted servants' labour and conduct, as His representatives, in their mortal life. "The *Lord of the servants* cometh, and reckoneth *with them*" (Matt. xxv. 19). They have been justified by faith. They have been united to their glorious Head. They "shall be saved" (1 Cor. iii. 15), whatever be the fate of their "work." But what will their Lord say of their work? What have they done for Him, in labour, in witness, and above all *in character*? He will tell them what He thinks. He will be infinitely kind; but He will not flatter. And somehow, surely, —"it doth not yet appear" how, but somehow—eternity, even the eternity of salvation, will bear the impress of that award, the impress of *the past of service,* estimated by the King. "What shall the harvest be?"

And all this shall take place (this is the special emphasis of the prospect here) with a solemn individuality

of enquiry. "*Every one of us—for himself*—shall give account." We reflected, a little above, on the true place of "individualism" in the life of grace. We see here that there will indeed be a place for it in the experiences of eternity. The scrutiny of "the tribunal' will concern not the Society, the Organism, the total, but the member, the man. Each will stand in a solemn solitude there, before his divine Examiner. What *he* was, as the Lord's member, that will be the question. What *he* shall be, as such, in the functions of the endless state, that will be the result.

Let us not be troubled over that prospect with the trouble of the worldling, as if we did not know Him who will scrutinize us, and did not love Him. Around the thought of His "tribunal," in that aspect, there are cast no exterminating terrors. But it is a prospect fit to make grave and full of purpose the life which yet "is hid with Christ in God," and which is life indeed through grace. It is a deep reminder that the beloved Saviour is also, and in no figure of speech, but in an eternal earnest, THE MASTER too. We would not have Him not to be this. He would not be all He is to us as Saviour, were He not this also, and for ever.

St Paul hastens to further appeals, after this solemn forecast. And now all his stress is laid on the duty of the "strong" to use their "strength" not for self-assertion, not for even spiritual selfishness, but all for Christ, all for others, all in love.

Ver. 13. **No more therefore let us judge one another; but judge,** decide, **this rather—not to set stumblingblock for our** (τῷ) **brother, or trap.** Ver. 14. **I know**—he instances his own experience and principle—**and am sure, in the Lord Jesus,** as one who is in union and communion with Him, seeing truth and

life from that view-point, **that nothing**, nothing of the sort in question, no food, no time, **is "unclean" of itself**; literally, "*by means of itself*," by any *inherent* mischief; **only, to the man who counts anything "unclean," to him it is unclean.** And therefore you, because you are not his conscience, must not tamper with his conscience. It is, in this case, mistaken; mistaken to his own loss, and to the loss of the Church. Yes, but what it wants is not your compulsion, but the Lord's light. If you can do so, bring that light to bear, in a testimony made impressive by holy love and unselfish considerateness. But dare not, for Christ's sake, compel a conscience. For conscience means the man's best actual sight of the law of right and wrong. It may be a dim and distorted sight; but it is his best at this moment. He cannot violate it without sin, nor can you bid him do so without yourself sinning. Conscience may not always see aright. But to transgress conscience is always wrong.

Ver. 15. **For** *—the word takes up the argument at large, rather than the last detail of it—**if for food's sake your brother suffers pain**, the pain of a moral struggle between his present convictions and your commanding example, **you have given up walking** (*οὐκέτι περιπατεῖς*) **love-wise. Do not, with your food,** (there is a searching point in the "*your*," touching to the quick the deep selfishness of the action,) **work his ruin for whom Christ died.**

Such sentences are too intensely and tenderly in earnest to be called sarcastic; otherwise, how fine and keen an edge they carry! "*For food's sake!*" "*With your food!*" The man is shaken out of the sleep of

* Probably read *γὰρ* not *δὲ*.

what seemed an assertion of liberty, but was after all much rather a dull indulgence of—that is, a mere slavery to—himself. "I like this meat; I like this drink; I don't like the worry of these scruples; they interrupt me, they annoy me." Unhappy man! It is better to be the slave of scruples, than of self. In order to allow yourself another dish—you would slight an anxious friend's conscience, and, so far as your conduct is concerned, push him to a violation of it. But that means, a push on the slope which leans towards spiritual ruin. The way to perdition is paved with violated consciences. The Lord may counteract your action, and save your injured brother from himself—and you. But your action is, none the less, calculated for his perdition. And all the while this soul, for which, in comparison with your dull and narrow "liberty," you care so little, was so much cared for by the Lord that He—died for it.

Oh consecrating thought, attached now, for ever, for the Christian, to every human soul which he can influence: "*For whom Christ died!*"

Ver. 16. **Do not therefore let your good,** your glorious creed of holy liberty in Christ, **be railed at,** as only a thinly veiled self-indulgence after all; **for the kingdom of our** (*τοῦ*) **God is not feeding** (*βρῶσις*) **and**

Ver. 17. **drinking;** He does not claim a throne in your soul, and in your Society, merely to enlarge your bill of fare, to make it your sacred privilege, as an end in itself, to take what you please at table; **but righteousness,** surely here, in the Roman Epistle, the "righteousness" of our divine acceptance, **and peace,** the peace of perfect relations with Him in Christ, **and joy in the Holy Spirit,** the pure strong gladness of the justified, as in their sanctuary of salvation they drink the "living water,"

and "rejoice always in the Lord." Ver. 18. **For he who in this way* lives as bondservant to Christ,** spending his spiritual talents not for himself but for his Master, **is pleasing to his** (*τῷ*) **God, and is genuine to his** fellow-**men** (*τοῖς ἀνθρώποις*). Yes, he *stands the test* (*δόκιμος*) of their keen scrutiny. They can soon detect the counterfeit under spiritual assertions which really assert self. But their conscience affirms the genuineness of a life of *unselfish* and happy holiness; that life "reverbs no hollowness."

Ver. 19. **Accordingly therefore let us pursue the** interests **of peace, and the** interests **of an edification which is mutual**; the "building up" (*οἰκοδομὴ*) which looks beyond the man to his brother, to his brethren, and tempers by that look even his plans for his own spiritual life.

Again he returns to the sorrowful *grotesque* of preferring personal comforts, and even the assertion of the principle of personal liberty, to the good of others. Ver. 20. **Do not for food's sake be undoing** (*κατάλυε*) **the work of our God.** "**All things are pure**"; he doubtless quotes a watchword often heard; and it was truth itself in the abstract, but capable of becoming a fatal fallacy in practice; **but** anything **is bad to the man who is brought by a stumblingblock to eat it.**† Yes, this is bad (*κακόν*). What is good (*καλὸν*) in contrast?

Ver. 21. **Good it is not to eat flesh, and not to drink** wine (a word for our time and its conditions), **and not to do anything in which your brother is stumbled,**

* Read *τούτῳ* not *τούτοις*. Possibly the pronoun refers to "the Holy Spirit" (*Πνεῦμα*) just mentioned.

† Lit., "*who eats by means of a stumblingblock*"; the example, with its weight of "public opinion," being *the means of* overriding his conscience.

**or entrapped, or weakened.** Yes, this is Christian liberty; a liberation from the strong and subtle law of self; a freedom to live for others, independent of their evil, but the servant of their souls.

Ver. 22. **You—the faith you have,* have it by yourself, in the presence of your God.** You have believed; you are therefore in Christ; in Christ you are therefore free, by faith, from the preparatory restrictions of the past. Yes; but all this is not given you for personal display, but for divine communion. Its right issue is in a holy intimacy with your God, as in the confidence of your acceptance you know Him as your Father, "nothing between." But as regards human intercourse, you are emancipated not that you may disturb the neighbours with shouts of freedom and acts of licence, but that you may be at leisure to serve them in love. **Happy the man who does not judge himself,** who does not, in effect, decide against his own soul, **in that which he approves,** *δοκιμάζει*, pronounces satisfactory to conscience. Unhappy he who says to himself, "This is lawful," when the verdict is all the while purchased by self-love, or otherwise by the fear of man, and the soul knows in its depths that the thing is not as it should be.

Ver. 23. **And the man who is doubtful,** whose conscience is not really satisfied between the right and wrong of the matter, **if he does eat, stands condemned,** in the court of his own heart, and of his aggrieved Lord's opinion, **because** it was **not the result of faith;** the action had not, for its basis, the holy conviction of the liberty of the justified. **Now anything which is not the result of faith, is sin;** that is to say, manifestly, "anything" *in such a case as this*;

* Probably read *πίστιν ἣν ἔχεις, κατὰ κτλ.*

any indulgence, any obedience to example, which the man, in a state of inward ambiguity, decides for on a principle other than that of his union with Christ by faith.

Thus the Apostle of Justification, and of the Holy Spirit, is the Apostle of Conscience too. He is as urgent upon the awful sacredness of our sense of right and wrong, as upon the offer and the security, in Christ, of peace with God, and the holy Indwelling, and the hope of glory. Let our steps reverently follow his, as we walk with God, and with men. Let us "rejoice in Christ Jesus," with a "joy" which is "in the Holy Ghost." Let us reverence duty, let us reverence conscience, in our own life, and also in the lives around us.

## CHAPTER XXX

*THE SAME SUBJECT: THE LORD'S EXAMPLE: HIS RELATION TO US ALL.*

ROMANS XV. 1-13

THE large and searching treatment which the Apostle has already given to the right use of Christian Liberty, is yet not enough. He must pursue the same theme further; above all, that he may put it into more explicit contact with the Lord Himself.

We gather without doubt that the state of the Roman Mission, as it was reported to St Paul, gave special occasion for such fulness of discussion. It is more than likely, as we have seen from the first, that the bulk of the disciples were ex-pagans; probably of very various nationalities, many of them Orientals, and as such not more favourable to distinctive Jewish claims and tenets. It is also likely that they found amongst them, or beside them, many Christian Jews, or Christian Jewish proselytes, of a type more or less pronounced in their own direction; the school whose less worthy members supplied the men to whom St Paul, a few years later, writing from Rome to Philippi, refers as "preaching Christ of envy and strife" (Phil. i. 15). The temptation of a religious (as of a secular) majority is always to tyrannize, more or less, in matters of thought and practice. A dominant school, in any

age or region, too easily comes to talk and act as if all decided expression on the other side were an instance of "intolerance," while yet it allows itself in sufficiently severe and censorious courses of its own. At Rome, very probably, this mischief was in action. The "strong," with whose principle, in its true form, St Paul agreed, were disposed to domineer in spirit over the "weak," because the weak were comparatively the few. Thus they were guilty of a double fault; they were presenting a miserable parody of holy liberty, and they were acting off the line of that unselfish fairness which is essential in the Gospel character. For the sake not only of the peace of the great Mission Church, but of the honour of the Truth, and of the Lord, the Apostle therefore dwells on mutual duties, and returns to them again and again after apparent conclusions of his discourse. Let us listen as he now reverts to the subject, to set it more fully than ever in the light of Christ.

Ver. 1. **But** (it is the "*but*" of resumption, and of new material) **we are bound, we the able,** *οἱ δυνατοὶ* (perhaps a sort of soubriquet for themselves among the school of "liberty," "*the capables*")—**to bear the weaknesses of the unable,** (again, possibly, a soubriquet, and in this case an unkindly one, for a school,)

Ver. 2. **and not to please ourselves. Each one of us, let him please** not himself but **his neighbour, as regards what is good, with a view to edification.**

"*Please*"; *ἀρέσκειν, ἀρεσκέτω.* The word is one often "soiled with ignoble use," in classical literature; it tends to mean the "*pleasing*" which fawns and flatters; the complaisance of the parasite. But it is lifted by Christian usage to a noble level. The cowardly and interested element drops out of it; the thought of willingness to do *anything to please* remains; only

limited by the law of right, and aimed only at the other's "good." Thus purified, it is used elsewhere of that holy "complaisance" in which the grateful disciple aims to "meet half way the wishes" of his LORD (see Col. i. 10). Here, it is the unselfish and watchful aim to meet half way, if possible, the thought and feeling of a fellow-disciple, to conciliate by sympathetic attentions, to be considerate in the smallest matters of opinion and conduct; a genuine exercise of inward liberty.*

There is a gulph of difference between interested timidity and disinterested considerateness. In flight from the former, the ardent Christian sometimes breaks the rule of the latter. St Paul is at his hand to warn him not to forget the great law of love. And THE LORD is at his hand too, with His own supreme Example.

Ver. 3. **For even our** (*ὁ*) **Christ did not please Himself; but, as it stands written** (Psal. lxix. 9), **"The reproaches of those who reproached Thee, fell upon Me."**

It is the first mention in the Epistle of the Lord's Example. His Person we have seen, and the Atoning Work, and the Resurrection Power, and the great Return. The holy Example can never take the place of any one of these facts of life eternal. But when they are secure, then the reverent study of the Example is not only in place; it is of urgent and immeasurable importance.

"*He did not please Himself.*" "Not My will, but Thine, be done." Perhaps the thought of the Apostle is dwelling on the very hour when those words were spoken, from beneath the olives of the Garden, and out of a depth of inward conflict and surrender which

* Observe that St Paul utterly repudiates the thought of "*pleasing*" (*ἀρέσκειν*) where it means a *servile and really compromising* deference to human opinion (Gal. i. 10).

"it hath not entered into the heart of man"—except the heart of the Man of men Himself—"to conceive." Then indeed "He did not please Himself." From pain as pain, from grief as grief, all sentient existence naturally, necessarily, shrinks; it "pleases itself" in escape or in relief. The infinitely refined sentient Existence of the Son of Man was no exception to this law of universal nature; and now He was called to such pain, to such grief, as never before met upon one head. We read the record of Gethsemane, and its sacred horror is always new; the disciple passes in thought out of the Garden even to the cruel tribunal of the Priest with a sense of relief; his Lord has risen from the unfathomable to the fathomable depth of His woes —till He goes down again, at noon next day, upon the Cross. "He pleased not Himself." He who soon after, on the shore of the quiet water, said to Peter, in view of his glorious and God-glorifying end, "They shall carry thee *whither thou wouldest not*"—along a path from which all thy manhood shall shrink—He too, as to His Human sensibility, "would not" go to His own unknown agonies. But then, blessed be His Name, "He would go" to them, from that other side, the side of the infinite harmony of His purpose with the purpose of His Father, in His immeasurable desire of His Father's glory. So He "drank that cup," which shall never now pass on to His people. And then He went forth into the house of Caiaphas, to be "reproached," during some six or seven terrible hours, by men who, professing zeal for God, were all the while blaspheming Him by every act and word of malice and untruth against His Son; and from Caiaphas He went to Pilate, and to Herod, and to the Cross, "bearing that reproach."

"I'm not anxious to die easy, when He died hard!" So said, not long ago, in a London attic, lying crippled and comfortless, a little disciple of the Man of Sorrows. He had "seen the Lord," in a strangely unlikely conversion, and had found a way of serving Him; it was to drop written fragments of His Word from the window on to the pavement below. And for this silent mission he would have no liberty if he were moved, in his last weeks, to a comfortable "Home." So he would rather serve his beloved Redeemer thus, "pleasing not himself," than be soothed in body, and gladdened by surrounding kindness, but with less "fellowship of His sufferings." Illustrious confessor—sure to be remembered when "the Lord of the servants cometh"! And with what an *a fortiori* does his simple answer to a kindly visitor's offer bring home to us (for it is for us as much as for the Romans) this appeal of the Apostle's! We are called in these words not necessarily to any agony of body or spirit; not necessarily even to an act of severe moral courage; only to patience, largeness of heart, brotherly love. Shall we not answer *Amen* from the soul? Shall not even one thought of "the fellowship of His sufferings" annihilate in us the miserable "self-pleasing" which shews itself in religious bitterness, in the refusal to attend and to understand, in a censoriousness which has nothing to do with firmness, in a personal attitude exactly opposite to love?

He has cited Psalm lxix. as a Scripture which, with all the solemn problems gathered round its dark "minatory" paragraph, yet lives and moves with Christ, the Christ of love. And now—not to confirm his application of the Psalm, for he takes that for granted—but to affirm the positive Christian use of the

Old Scriptures as a whole, he goes on to speak at large of "the things fore-written." He does so with the special thought that the Old Testament is full of truth in point for the Roman Church just now; full of the bright, *and uniting*, "*hope*" of glory; full of examples as well as precepts for "*patience*," that is to say, holy perseverance under trial; full finally of the Lord's equally gracious relation to "the Nations" and to Israel.

Ver. 4. **For all the things fore-written,** written in the Scriptures of the elder time, in the age that both preceded the Gospel and prepared for it, **for our instruction were written**—with an emphasis upon "*our*" —**that through the patience and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might hold our** (*τὴν*) **hope,** the hope "sure and steadfast" of glorification in the glory of our conquering Lord. That is to say, the true "Author behind the authors" of that mysterious Book watched, guided, effected its construction, from end to end, with the purpose full in His view of instructing for all time the developed Church of Christ. And in particular, He adjusted thus the Old Testament records and precepts of "*patience*," the patience which "suffers *and is strong*," suffers and *goes forward*,* and of "*encouragement*," *παράκλησις*, the word which is more than "*consolation*," while it includes it; for it means the voice of positive and enlivening appeal. Rich indeed are Pentateuch, and Prophets, and Hagiographa, alike in commands to persevere and be of good courage, and in examples of men who were made brave and patient by the power of God in them, as they took Him at His word. And all this, says the Apostle, was on purpose,

* The noble word *ὑπομονή*, as we have remarked already, is rarely if ever *merely* passive in New Testament usage.

on God's purpose. That multifarious Book is indeed in this sense one. Not only is it, in its Author's intention, full of Christ; in the same intention it is full of Him for us. Immortal indeed is its preciousness, if this was His design. Confidently may we explore its pages, looking in them first for Christ, then for ourselves, in our need of peace, and strength, and hope.

Let us add one word, in view of the anxious controversy of our day, within the Church, over the structure and nature of those "divine Scriptures," as the Christian Fathers love to call them. The use of the Holy Book in the spirit of this verse, the persistent searching of it for the preceptive mind of God in it, with the belief that it was "written for our instruction," will be the surest and deepest means to give us "perseverance" and "encouragement" about the Book itself. The more we really *know* the Bible, at first hand, before God, with the knowledge both of acquaintance and reverent sympathy, the more shall we be able with intelligent spiritual conviction, to "*persist*" and "*be of good cheer*" in the conviction that it is indeed not of man, (though through man,) but of God. The more shall we use it as the Lord and the Apostles used it, as being not only of God, but of God for us; His Word, and for us. The more shall we make it our divine daily Manual for a life of patient and cheerful sympathies, holy fidelity, and "that blessed Hope"—which draws "nearer now than when we believed."

Ver. 5. **But may the God of the patience and the encouragement,** He who is Author and Giver of the graces unfolded in His Word, He without whom even that Word is but a sound without significance in the soul, **grant you,** in His own sovereign way of acting on and in human wills and affections, **to be of one**

**mind mutually** (ἐν ἀλλήλοις), **according to Christ Jesus**; "*Christwise*," in His steps, in His temper, under His precepts; having towards one another, not necessarily an identity of opinion on all details, but a community of sympathetic kindness. No comment here is better than this same Writer's later words, from Rome (Phil. ii. 2-5); "Be of one mind; having the same love; nothing by strife, or vainglory; esteeming others better than yourselves; looking on the things of others; with the same mind which was also in Christ Jesus," when He humbled Himself for us. And all this, not only for the comfort of the community, but for the glory of God: **that unanimously, with one mouth, you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**; turning from the sorrowful friction worked by self-will when it intrudes into the things of heaven, to an antidote, holy and effectual, found in adoring Him who is equally near to all His true people, in His Son.

Ver. 6.

**Wherefore welcome one another into fellowship, even as our** (ὁ) **Christ welcomed you,*** all the individuals of your company, and all the groups of it, **to our** (τοῦ) **God's glory.** These last words may mean either that the Lord's welcome of "*you*" "*glorified*" His Father's grace; or that that grace will be "*glorified*" by the holy victory of love over prejudice among the Roman saints. Perhaps this latter explanation is to be preferred, as it echoes and enforces the last words of the previous verse. But why should not both references reside in the one phrase, where the actions of the Lord and His disciples are seen in their deep harmony?

Ver. 7.

* So read, not ἡμᾶς. The point of the mention here of "*you*" is manifest.

**For** * **I say that Christ stands constituted** † **Servant**
Ver. 8. (*διάκονον*) **of the Circumcision,** Minister of divine blessings to Israel, **on behalf of God's truth, so as to ratify** in act **the promises belonging to the Fathers,** so as to secure and vindicate their fulfilment, by His coming as Son of David, Son of Abraham;
Ver. 9. **but** (a "*but*" which, by its slight correction, reminds the Jew that the Promise, given wholly *through* him, was not given wholly *for* him) **so that the Nations, on mercy's behalf, should glorify God,** blessing and adoring Him on account of a salvation which, in their case, was less of "*truth*" than of "*mercy*," because it was less explicitly and immediately of covenant; **as it stands written** (Psal. xviii. 49), "**For this I will confess to Thee,** will own Thee, **among the Nations, and will strike the harp** (*ψαλῶ*) **to Thy Name**"; Messiah confessing His Eternal Father's glory in the midst of His redeemed Gentile subjects, who sing their "lower part" with Him. **And again it,** the Scripture, **says,**
Ver. 10. (Deut. xxxii. 43), "**Be jubilant, Nations, with His people.**"‡ **And again** (Psal. cxvii. 1),
Ver. 11. "**Praise the Lord, all the Nations, and let all the peoples praise Him again**" (*ἐπαινεσάτωσαν*). **And again Isaiah says** (xi. 10), "**There shall come**
Ver. 12. (literally, "*shall be*") **the Root of Jesse, and He who rises up**—"*rises*," in the present tense of the

* Reading *γὰρ* not *δέ*, and omitting *Ἰησοῦν* just afterwards.

† *Γεγενῆσθαι*, the perfect. But perhaps read *γενέσθαι*.

‡ In the received Hebrew Text the word אֵת, "*with*," is absent, and the rendering may be, in paraphrase, either, "*Ye Nations, congratulate His people*," or "*Rejoice ye Nations, who are His people.*" Either the great Rabbi-Apostle read אֵת, or he gave the essence of the Mosaic words, not their form, (using the Lxx. rendering as his form,) to convey the thought of the loving sympathy, before God, of Israel and the Nations.

divine decree—**to rule (the) Nations; on Him (the) Nations shall hope**; with the hope which is in fact faith, looking from the sure present to the promised future. Ver. 13. **Now may the God of that hope,** τῆς ἐλπίδος, "*the* Hope" just cited from the Prophet, the expectation of all blessing, up to its crown and flower in glory, on the basis of Messiah's work, **fill you with all joy and peace in your** (τῷ) **believing, so that you may overflow in that** (τῇ) **hope, in the Holy Spirit's power**; "*in* His power," clasped as it were within His divine embrace, and thus energized to look upward, heavenward, away from embittering and dividing temptations to the unifying as well as beatifying prospect of your Lord's Return.

He closes here his long, wise, tender appeal and counsel about the "unhappy divisions" of the Roman Mission. He has led his readers as it were all round the subject. With the utmost tact, and also candour, he has given them his own mind, "in the Lord," on the matter in dispute. He has pointed out to the party of scruple and restriction the fallacy of claiming the function of Christ, and asserting a divine rule where He has not imposed one. He has addressed the "strong," (with whom he agrees in a certain sense,) at much greater length, reminding them of the moral error of making more of any given application of their principle than of the law of love in which the principle was rooted. He has brought both parties to the feet of Jesus Christ as absolute Master. He has led them to gaze on Him as their blessed Example, in His infinite self-oblivion for the cause of God, and of love. He has poured out before them the prophecies, which tell at once the Christian Judaist and the ex-pagan convert

that in the eternal purpose Christ was given equally to both, in the line of "truth," in the line of "mercy." Now lastly he clasps them impartially to his own heart in this precious and pregnant benediction, beseeching for both sides, and for all their individuals, a wonderful fulness of those blessings in which most speedily and most surely *the spirit* of their strife would expire. Let that prayer be granted, in its pure depth and height, and how could "the weak brother" look with quite his old anxiety on the problems suggested by the dishes at a meal, and by the dates of the Rabbinic Calendar? And how could "the capable" bear any longer to lose his joy in God by an assertion, full of self, of his own insight and "liberty"? Profoundly happy and at rest in their Lord, whom they embraced by faith as their Righteousness and Life, and whom they anticipated in hope as their coming Glory; filled through their whole consciousness, by the indwelling Spirit, with a new insight into CHRIST; they would fall into each other's embrace, in Him. They would be much more ready, when they met, to speak "concerning the King" than to begin a new stage of their not very elevating discussion.

How many a Church controversy, now as then, would die of inanition, leaving room for a living truth, if the disputants could only *gravitate*, as to their always most beloved theme, to the praises and glories of their redeeming LORD Himself! It is at His feet, and in His arms, that we best understand both His truth, and the thoughts, rightful or mistaken, of our brethren.

Meanwhile, let us take this benedictory prayer, as we may take it, from its instructive context, and carry it out with us into all the contexts of life. What the Apostle prayed for the Romans, in view of their con-

troversies, he prays for us, as for them, in view of everything. Let us "stand back and look at the picture." Here—conveyed in this strong petition—is St Paul's idea of the true Christian's true life, and the true life of the true Church. What are the elements, and what is the result?

It is a life lived in direct contact with God. "Now *the God of hope* fill you." He remits them here (as above, ver. 5) from even himself to the Living God. In a sense, he sends them even from "the things forewritten," to the Living God; not in the least to disparage the Scriptures, but because the great function of the divine Word, as of the divine Ordinances, is to guide the soul into *an immediate* intercourse with the Lord God in His Son, and to secure it therein. God is to deal direct with the Romans. He is to manipulate, He is to fill, their being.

It is a life not starved or straitened, but full. "The God of hope *fill you*." The disciple, and the Church, is not to live as if grace were like a stream "in the year of drought," now settled into an almost stagnant deep, then struggling with difficulty over the stones of the shallow. The man, and the Society, are to live and work in tranquil but moving strength, "rich" in the fruits of their Lord's "poverty" (2 Cor. viii. 9); filled out of His fulness; never, spiritually, at a loss for Him; never, practically, having to do or bear except in His large and gracious power.

It is a life bright and beautiful; "filled with *all joy and peace*." It is to shew a surface fair with the reflected sky of Christ, Christ present, Christ to come. A sacred while open happiness and a pure internal repose is to be there, born of "His presence, in which is fulness of joy," and of the sure prospect of His

Return, bringing with it "pleasures for evermore." Like that mysterious ether of which the natural philosopher tells us, this joy, this peace, found and maintained "in the Lord," is to pervade *all* the contents of the Christian life, its moving masses of duty or trial, its interspaces of rest or silence; not always demonstrative but always underlying, and always a living power.

It is a life of faith; "all joy and peace *in your believing*." That is to say, it is a life dependent for its all upon a Person and His promises. Its glad certainty of peace with God, of the possession of His Righteousness, is by means not of sensations and experiences, but of believing; it comes, and stays, by taking Christ at His word. Its power over temptation, its "victory and triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh," is by the same means. The man, the Church, takes the Lord at His word;—"I am with you always"; "Through Me thou shalt do valiantly";—and faith, that is to say, Christ trusted in practice, is "more than conqueror."

It is a life overflowing with the heavenly hope; "that ye may abound *in the hope*." Sure of the past, and of the present, it is—what out of Christ no life can be—sure of the future. The golden age, for this happy life, is in front, and is no Utopia. "Now is our salvation nearer"; "We look for that blissful (*μακαρίαν*) hope, the appearing of our great God and Saviour"; "Them which sleep in Him God will bring with Him"; "We shall be caught up together with them; we shall ever be with the Lord"; "They shall see His face; thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty."

And all this it is as a life lived "*in the power of the Holy Ghost*." Not by enthusiasm, not by any stimulus

which self applies to self; not by resources for gladness and permanence found in independent reason or affection; but by the almighty, all-tender power of the Comforter. "The Lord, the Life-Giver," giving life by bringing us to the Son of God, and uniting us to Him, is the Giver and strong Sustainer of the faith, and so of the peace, the joy, the hope, of this blessed life.

"Now it was not written for their sakes only, but for us also," in our circumstances of personal and of common experience. Large and pregnant is the application of this one utterance to the problems perpetually raised by the divided state of organization, and of opinion, in modern Christendom. It gives us one secret, above and below all others, as the sure panacea, if it may but be allowed to work, for this multifarious malady which all who think deplore. That secret is "the secret of the Lord, which is with them that fear Him" (Psal. xxv. 14). It is a fuller life in the individual, and so in the community, of the peace and joy of believing; a larger abundance of "that blessed hope," given by that power for which numberless hearts are learning to thirst with a new intensity, "the power of the Holy Ghost."

It was in that direction above all that the Apostle gazed as he yearned for the unity, not only spiritual but practical, of the Roman saints. This great master of order, this man made for government, alive with all his large wisdom to the sacred importance, in its true place, of the external mechanism of Christianity, yet makes no mention of it here, nay, scarcely gives one allusion to it in the whole Epistle. The word "Church" is not heard till the final chapter; and then it is used only, or almost only, of the scattered mission-stations, or even mission-*groups*, in their individuality.

The ordered Ministry only twice, and in the most passing manner, comes into the long discourse ; in the words (xii. 6-8) about prophecy, ministration, teaching, exhortation, leadership ; and in the mention (xvi. 1) of Phœbe's relation to the Cenchrean Church. He is addressing the saints of that great City which was afterwards, in the tract of time, to develop into even terrific exaggerations the idea of Church Order. But he has practically nothing to say to them about unification and cohesion beyond this appeal to hold fast together by drawing nearer each and all to the Lord, and so filling each one his soul and life with Him.

Our modern problems must be met with attention, with firmness, with practical purpose, with due regard to history, and with submission to revealed truth. But if they are to be solved indeed they must be met outside the spirit of self, and in the communion of the Christian with Christ, by the power of the Spirit of God.

## CHAPTER XXXI

*ROMAN CHRISTIANITY: ST PAUL'S COMMISSION: HIS INTENDED ITINERARY: HE ASKS FOR PRAYER*

ROMANS XV. 14-33

THE Epistle hastens to its close. As to its instructions, doctrinal or moral, they are now practically written. The Way of Salvation lies extended, in its radiant outline, before the Romans, and ourselves. The Way of Obedience, in some of its main tracks, has been drawn firmly on the field of life. Little remains but the Missionary's last words about persons and plans, and then the great task is done.

He will say a warm, gracious word about the spiritual state of the Roman believers. He will justify, with a noble courtesy, his own authoritative attitude as their counsellor. He will talk a little of his hoped for and now seemingly approaching visit, and matters in connexion with it. He will greet the individuals whom he knows, and commend the bearer of the Letter, and add last messages from his friends. Then Phœbe may receive her charge, and go on her way.

Ver. 14. **But I am sure, my brethren, quite on my own part** (*καὶ αὐτὸς ἐγώ*), **about you, that you are, yourselves,** irrespective of my influence, **brimming with goodness,** with high Christian qualities in general, **filled with all knowledge, competent in fact** (*καὶ*) **to admonish**

**one another.** Is this flattery, interested and insincere? Is it weakness, easily persuaded into a false optimism? Surely not; for the speaker here is the man who has spoken straight to the souls of these same people about sin, and judgment, and holiness; about the holiness of these everyday charities which some of them (so he has said plainly enough) had been violating. But a truly great heart always loves to praise where it can, and, discerningly, to think and say the best. He who is Truth itself said of His imperfect, His disappointing followers, as He spoke of them in their hearing to His Father, "They have kept Thy word"; "I am glorified in them" (John xvii. 6, 10). So here his Servant does not indeed give the Romans a formal certificate of perfection, but he does rejoice to know, and to say, that their community is Christian in a high degree, and that in a certain sense they have not needed information about Justification by Faith, nor about principles of love and liberty in their intercourse. In essence, all has been in their cognizance already; an assurance which could not have been entertained in regard of every Mission, certainly. He has written not as to children, giving them an alphabet, but as to men, developing facts into science.

Ver. 15. **But with a certain boldness** (*τολμηρότερον*) **I have written*** **to you, here and there,† just as reminding you; because of the grace,** the free gift of his commission and of the equipment for it, **given** Ver. 16. **me by our** (*τοῦ*) **God,** given in order to **my being Christ Jesus' minister** sent **to the Nations, doing priest-work with the Gospel of God, that the oblation of the Nations,**

* "Εγραψα: the epistolary aorist.

† Ἀπὸ μέρους "*as regards part*" of his instructions and cautions. He probably refers particularly to the discussions of ch. xiv. 1—xv. 13.

the oblation which is in fact the Nations self-laid upon the spiritual altar, **may be acceptable, consecrated in the Holy Spirit.** It is a startling and splendid passage of metaphor. Here once, in all the range of his writings (unless we except the few and affecting words of Phil. ii. 17), the Apostle presents himself to his converts as a sacrificial ministrant, a "*priest*" in the sense which usage (not etymology) has so long stamped on that English word as its more special sense. Never do the great Founders of the Church, and never does He who is its Foundation, use the term ἱερεύς, sacrificing, mediating, priest, as a term to designate the Christian minister in any of his orders; *never*, if this passage is not to be reckoned in, with its ἱερουργεῖν, its "*priest-work*," as we have ventured to translate the Greek. In the distinctively sacerdotal Epistle, the Hebrews, the word ἱερεὺς comes indeed into the foreground. But there it is absorbed into THE LORD. It is appropriated altogether to Him in His self-sacrificial Work once done, and in His heavenly Work now always doing, the work of mediatorial impartation, from His throne,* of the blessings which His great Offering won. One other Christian application of the sacrificial title we have in the Epistles: "Ye are a holy priesthood," "a royal priesthood" (1 Pet. ii. 5, 9). But who are "*ye*"? Not the consecrated pastorate, but the consecrated Christian company altogether. And what are the altar-sacrifices of that company? "Sacrifices *spiritual*"; "*the praises* of Him who called them into His wonderful light" (1 Pet. ii. 5, 9). In the Christian Church, the pre-Levitical ideal of the old Israel reappears in its sacred

* He is seen in the Epistle not before the throne, standing, but *on* the throne, *seated.*

reality. He who offered to the Church of Moses (Exod. xix. 6) to be one great priesthood, "a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation," found His favoured nation unready for the privilege, and so Levi representatively took the place alone. But now, in His new Israel, as all are sons in the Son, so all are priests in the Priest. And the sacred Ministry of that Israel, the Ministry which is His own divine institution, the gift (Eph. iv. 11) of the ascended Lord to His Church, is never once designated, as such, by the term which would have marked it as the analogue to Levi, or to Aaron.

Is this passage in any degree an exception? No; for it contains its own full inner evidence of its metaphorical cast. The "*priest-working*" here has regard, we find, not to a ritual, but to "*the Gospel.*" "*The oblation*" is —the Nations. The hallowing Element, shed as it were upon the victims, is the Holy Ghost. Not in a material temple, and serving at no tangible altar, the Apostle brings his multitudinous *converts* as his holocaust to the Lord. The Spirit, at his preaching and on their believing, descends upon them; and they lay themselves "a living sacrifice" where the fire of love shall consume them, to His glory.

Ver. 17. **I have therefore my** (read τὴν) right to **exultation, in Christ Jesus,** as His member and implement, **as to what regards God**; not in any respect as regards myself, apart from Him. And then he proceeds as if about to say, in evidence of that assertion, that he always declines to intrude on a brother Apostle's ground, and to claim as his own experience what was in the least degree another's; but that indeed through him, in sovereign grace, God *has* done great things, far and wide. This he expresses thus, in energetic compressions of diction:

**For I will not dare to talk at all of things which**
Ver. 18. **Christ did not work out through me,** (there is an emphasis on "*me*,") **to effect obedience of (the)**
Ver. 19. **Nations** to His Gospel, **by word and deed, in power of signs and wonders, in power of God's Spirit**; a reference, strangely impressive by its very passingness, to the exercise of miracle-working gifts by the writer. This man, so strong in thought, so practical in counsel, so extremely unlikely to have been under an illusion about a large factor in his adult and intensely conscious experience, speaks direct from himself of his wonder-works. And the allusion, thus dropped by the way and left behind, is itself an evidence to the perfect mental balance of the witness; this was no enthusiast, intoxicated with ambitious spiritual visions, but a man put in trust with a mysterious yet sober treasure. **So that from**
Ver. 19. **Jerusalem, and round about** it (Acts xxvi. 20), **as far as the Illyrian** region, the highland seabord which looks across the Adriatic to the long eastern side of Italy, **I have fulfilled the Gospel of Christ,** carried it practically everywhere, *satisfied the idea* of so distributing it that it shall be accessible everywhere to the native races.

Ver. 20. **But** this I have done **with this ambition, to preach the Gospel not where Christ was already named, that I might not build on another man's foun-**
Ver. 12. **dation; but** to act on the divine word, **as it stands written** (Isai. lii. 15), "**They to whom no news was carried about Him, shall see; and those who have not heard, shall understand.**" Here was an "*ambition*" as far-sighted as it was noble. Would that the principle of it could have been better remembered in the history of Christendom, and not least in our own

age ; a wasteful over-lapping of effort on effort, system on system, would not need now to be so much deplored.

Ver. 22. **Thus as a fact** (*καὶ*) **I was hindered for the most part**—hindrances were the rule, signals of opportunity the exception—**in coming to you**; you, whose City is no untrodden ground to messengers of Christ, and therefore not the ground which

Ver. 23. had *a first* claim on me. **But now, as no longer having place in these regions,** eastern Roman Europe yielding him no longer an unattempted and accessible district to enter, **and having a home-sick feeling** (*ἐπιποθίαν*: see above, i. 11) **for coming to you, these many years—whenever I may be journeying to**

Ver. 24. **Spain, [I will come to you*]. For I hope, on my journey through, to see the sight of you** (*θεάσασθαι*, as if the view of so important a Church would be a *spectacle* indeed), **and by you † to be escorted there, if first I may have my fill of you, however imperfectly** (*ἀπὸ μέρους*).

As always, in the fine courtesy of pastoral love, he says more, and thinks more, of his own expected gain of refreshment and encouragement from them, than even of what he may have to impart to them. So he had thought, and so spoken, in his opening page (i. 11, 12); it is the same heart throughout.

How little did he realize the line and details of the destined fulfilment of that "home-sick feeling"! He was indeed to "see Rome," and for no passing "sight of the scene." For two long years of sorrows and joys, restraints and wonderful occasions, innumerable colloquies, and the writing of great Scriptures, he was

* These words have weak documentary support. But surely the ellipsis left by their absence is difficult to accept, even in St Paul's free style.

† Or perhaps "*from you*," *ἀφ' ὑμῶν*.

to "dwell in his own hired lodgings" there. But he did not see what lay between.

For St Paul ordinarily, as always for us, it was true that "we know not what awaits us." For us, as for him, it is better "to walk with God in the dark, than to go alone in the light."

Did he ultimately visit Spain? We shall never know until perhaps we are permitted to ask him hereafter. It is not at all impossible that, released from his Roman prison, he first went westward and then—as at some time he certainly did—travelled to the Levant. But no tradition, however faint, connects St Paul with the great Peninsula which glories in her legend of St James. Is it irrelevant to remember that *in his Gospel* he has notably visited Spain in later ages? It was the Gospel of St Paul, the simple grandeur of his exposition of Justification by Faith, which in the sixteenth century laid hold on multitudes of the noblest of Spanish hearts, till it seemed as if not Germany, not England, bid fairer to become again a land of "truth in the light." The terrible Inquisition utterly crushed the springing harvest, at Valladolid, at Seville, and in that ghastly Quemadero at Madrid, which, five-and-twenty years ago, was excavated by accident, to reveal its deep strata of ashes, and charred bones, and all the débris of the *Autos*. But now again, in the mercy of God, and in happier hours, the New Testament is read in the towns of Spain, and in her highland villages, and churches are gathering around the holy light, spiritual descendants of the true, the primeval, Church of Rome. May "the God of hope fill them with all peace and joy in believing."

Ver. 25. **But now I am journeying to Jerusalem,** the journey whose course we know so well from Acts xx., xxi., **ministering to the saints,** serving the

poor converts of the holy City as the collector and conveyer of alms for their necessities. Ver. 26. **For Macedonia and Achaia,** the northern and southern Provinces of Roman Greece, finely *personified* in this vivid passage, **thought good to make something of a** (*τινὰ*) **communication,** a certain gift to be "*shared*" among the recipients, **for the poor of the saints who live at Jerusalem;** the place where poverty seemed specially, for whatever reason, to beset the converts. "**For they thought good!**"—yes; but there is a different side to the matter. Ver. 27. Macedonia and Achaia are generous friends, but they have an obligation too: **And debtors they are to them,** to these poor people of the old City. **For if in their spiritual things the Nations shared, they,** these Nations, **are in debt, as a fact,** (*καί,*) **in things carnal,** things belonging to our "life in the flesh," **to minister to them;** *λειτουργῆσαι,* to do them public *and religious* service.

**When I have finished this then, and sealed this fruit to them,** put them into ratified ownership of this "*proceed*" (*καρπὸν*) of Christian love, Ver. 28. **I will come away by your road** (*δι' ὑμῶν*) **to Spain.** (He *means*, "if the Lord will"; it is instructive to note that even St Paul does not make it a duty, with an almost superstitious iteration, always to *say so*). **Now I know that, coming to you, in the fulness of Christ's benediction* I shall come.** He will come with his Lord's "*benediction*" on him, as His messenger to the Roman disciples; Christ will send him charged with heavenly messages, and attended with His own prospering presence. Ver. 29. And this will be "*in fulness*"; with

* Omitting the words *τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ.*

a rich overflow of saving truth, and heavenly power, and blissful fellowship.

Here he pauses, to ask them for that boon of which he is so covetous—intercessory prayer. He has been speaking with a kind and even sprightly pleasantry (there is no irreverence in the recognition) of those Personages, Macedonia and Achaia, and their gift, which is also their debt. He has spoken also of what we know from elsewhere (1 Cor. xvi. 1-4) to have been his own scrupulous purpose not only to collect the alms but to see them punctually delivered, above all suspicion of misuse. He has talked with cheerful confidence of "the road by Rome to Spain." But now he realizes what the visit to Jerusalem involves for himself. He has tasted in many places, and at many times, the bitter hatred felt for him in unbelieving Israel; a hatred the more bitter, probably, the more his astonishing activity and influence were felt in region after region. Now he is going to the central focus of the enmity; to the City of the Sanhedrin, and of the Zealots. And St Paul is no Stoic, indifferent to fear, lifted in an unnatural exaltation above circumstances, though he is ready to walk through them in the power of Christ. His heart anticipates the experiences of outrage and revilings, and the possible breaking up of all his missionary plans. He thinks too of prejudice within the Church, as well as of hatred from without; he is not at all sure that his cherished collection will not be coldly received, or even rejected, by the Judaists of the mother-church; whom yet he must and will call "saints." So he tells all to the Romans, with a generous and winning confidence in their sympathy, and begs their prayers, and above all sets them praying that he may not be disappointed of his longed-for visit to them.

All was granted. He was welcomed by the Church. He was delivered from the fanatics, by the strong arm of the Empire. He did reach Rome, and he had holy joy there. Only, the Lord took His own way, a way they knew not, to answer Paul and his friends.

Ver. 30. **But I appeal to you, brethren,**—the "*but*" carries an implication that something lay in the way of the happy prospect just mentioned,—**by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit,** by that holy family affection inspired by the Holy One into the hearts which He has regenerated,* **to wrestle along**

Ver. 31. **with me in your prayers on my behalf to our** (*τῷ*) **God; that I may be rescued from those who disobey** the Gospel **in Judea, and that my ministration † which takes me to Jerusalem** (*ἡ εἰς Ἰερουσαλὴμ*) **may prove acceptable to the saints,** may be taken by the Christians there without prejudice, and in love; **that I**

Ver. 32. **may with joy come to you, through the will of God,‡ and may share refreshing rest with you,** the rest of holy fellowship where the tension of discussion and opposition is intermitted, and the two parties perfectly "understand one another" in their Lord. **But the God of our** (*τῆς*) **peace be with**

Ver. 33. **you all.** Yes, so be it, whether or no the longed-for "*joy*" and "*refreshing rest*" is granted in His providence to the Apostle. With his beloved Romans, anywise, let there be "*peace*"; peace in their community, and in their souls; peace with God, and peace in Him. And so it will be, whether their human

* So we explain, rather than take the reference to be to the Holy Spirit's *love for us.* In this context, surely, this latter would be less in point.

† Διακονία: another possible reading is δωροφορία, "*gift-bearing.*"

‡ Perhaps read, "*through the will of the Lord Jesus.*"

friend is or is not permitted, to see them, if only the Eternal Friend is there.

There is a deep and attractive tenderness, as we have seen above, in this paragraph, where the writer's heart tells the readers quite freely of its personal misgivings and longings. One of the most pathetic, sometimes one of the most beautiful, phenomena of human life is the strong man in his weak hour, or rather in his feeling hour, when he is glad of the support of those who may be so much his weaker. There is a sort of strength which prides itself upon never shewing such symptoms ; to which it is a point of honour to act and speak always as if the man were self-contained and self-sufficient. But this is a narrow type of strength, not a great one. The strong man truly great is not afraid, in season, to "let himself go" ; he is well able to recover. An underlying power leaves him at leisure to shew upon the surface very much of what he feels. The largeness of his insight puts him into manifold contact with others, and keeps him open to their sympathies, however humble and inadequate these sympathies may be. The Lord Himself, "mighty to save," cared more than we can fully know for human fellow-feeling. "Will ye also go away ?" "Ye are they that have continued with Me in My temptations" ; "Tarry ye here, and watch with Me" ; "Lovest thou Me ?"

No false spiritual pride suggests it to St Paul to conceal his anxieties from the Romans. It is a temptation sometimes to those who have been called to help and strengthen other men, to affect for themselves a strength which perhaps they do not quite feel. It is well meant. The man is afraid that if he owns to a burthen he may seem to belie the Gospel of

"perfect peace"; that if he even lets it be suspected that he is not always in the ideal Christian frame, his warmest exhortations and testimonies may lose their power. But at all possible hazards let him, about such things as about all others, tell the truth. It is a sacred duty in itself; the heavenly Gospel has no corner in it for the manœuvres of spiritual prevarication. And he will find assuredly that truthfulness, transparent candour, will not really discount his witness to the promises of his Lord. It may humiliate *him*, but it will not discredit Jesus Christ. It will indicate the imperfection of the recipient, but not any defect in the thing received. And the fact that the witness has been found quite candid against himself, where there is occasion, will give a double weight to his every direct testimony to the possibility of a life lived in the hourly peace of God.

It is no part of our Christian duty to feel doubts and fears! And the more we act upon our Lord's promises as they stand, the more we shall rejoice to find that misgivings tend to vanish where once they were always thickening upon us. Only, it is our duty always to be transparently honest.

However, we must not treat this theme here too much as if St Paul had given us an unmistakable text for it. His words now before us *express* no "carking care" about his intended visit to Jerusalem. They only indicate a deep sense of the gravity of the prospect, and of its dangers. And we know from elsewhere (see especially Acts xxi. 13) that that sense did sometimes amount to an agony of feeling, in the course of the very journey which he now contemplates. And we see him here quite without the wish to conceal his heart in the matter.

In closing we note, "for our learning," his example as he is a man who craves to be prayed for. Prayer, that great mystery, that blessed fact and power, was indeed vital to St Paul. He is always praying himself; he is always asking other people to pray for him. He "has seen Jesus Christ our Lord"; he is his Lord's inspired Minister and Delegate; he has been "caught up into the third heaven"; he has had a thousand proofs that "all things," infallibly, "work together for his good." But he is left by this as certain as ever, with a persuasion as simple as a child's, and also as deep as his own life-worn spirit, that it is immensely well worth his while to secure the intercessory prayers of those who know the way to God in Christ.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### *A COMMENDATION: GREETINGS: A WARNING: A DOXOLOGY*

ROMANS xvi. 1-27

ONCE more, with a reverent licence of thought, we may imagine ourselves to be watching in detail the scene in the house of Gaius. Hour upon hour has passed over Paul and his scribe as the wonderful Message has developed itself, at once and everywhere the word of man and the Word of God. They began at morning, and the themes of sin, and righteousness, and glory, of the present and the future of Israel, of the duties of the Christian life, of the special problems of the Roman Mission, have carried the hours along to noon, to afternoon. Now, to the watcher from the westward lattice,

> "Slow sinks, more lovely ere his race be run,
> Along Morea's hills the setting sun;
> Not, as in northern climes, obscurely bright,
> But one unclouded blaze of living light."

The Apostle, pacing the chamber, as men are wont to do when they use the pens of others, is aware that his message is at an end, as to doctrine and counsel. But before he bids his willing and wondering secretary rest from his labours, he has to discharge his own heart of the personal thoughts and affections which have lain

ready in it all the while, and which his last words about his coming visit to the City have brought up in all their life and warmth. And now Paul and Tertius are no longer alone; other brethren have found their way to the chamber—Timotheus, Lucius, Jason, Sosipater; Gaius himself; Quartus; and no less a neighbour than Erastus, Treasurer of Corinth. A page of personal messages is yet to be dictated, from St Paul, and from his friends.

Now first he must not forget the pious woman who is —so we surely may assume—to take charge of this inestimable packet, and to deliver it at Rome. We know nothing of Phœbe but from this brief mention. We cannot perhaps be formally certain that she is here described as a female Church-*official*, a "deaconess" in a sense of that word familiar in later developments of Church-order—a woman set apart by the laying-on of hands, appointed to enquire into and relieve temporal distress, and to be the teacher of female enquirers in the mission. But there is at least a great likelihood that something like this was her position; for she was not merely an active Christian, she was "a ministrant of *the Church*." And she was certainly, as a person, worthy of reliance and of loving commendatory praise, now that some cause —absolutely unknown to us; perhaps nothing more unusual than a change of residence, obliged by private circumstances—took her from Achaia to Italy. She had been a devoted and it would seem particularly *a brave* * friend of converts in trouble, and of St Paul himself. Perhaps in the course of her visits to the desolate she had fought difficult battles of protest, where she found harshness and oppression. Perhaps she had pleaded the

* See on προστάτις below.

forgotten cause of the poor, with a woman's courage, before some neglectful richer "brother."

Then Rome itself, as he sees Phœbe reaching it, rises—as yet only in fancy; it was still unknown to him—upon his mind. And there, moving up and down in that strange and almost awful world, he sees one by one the members of a large group of his personal Christian friends, and his beloved Aquila and Prisca are most visible of all. These must be individually saluted.

What the nature of these friendships was we know in some instances, for we are told here. But why the persons were at Rome, in the place which Paul himself had never reached, we do not know, nor ever shall. Many students of the Epistle, it is well known, find a serious difficulty in this list of friends so placed—the persons so familiar, the place so strange; and they would have us look on this sixteenth chapter as a fragment from some other Letter, pieced in here by mistake; or what not. But no ancient copy of the Epistle gives us, by its condition, any real ground for such conjectures. And all that we have to do to realize possibilities in the actual features of the case, is to assume that many at least of this large Roman group, as surely Aquila and Prisca,* had recently migrated from the Levant to Rome; a migration as common and almost as easy then as is the modern influx of foreign denizens to London.

Bishop Lightfoot, in an Excursus in his edition of the Philippian Epistle,† has given us reason to think that not a few of the "Romans" named here by St Paul were members of that "Household of Cæsar" of

* See 1 Cor. xvi. 19. † Pp. 171-178 (eighth edition).

which in later days he speaks to the Philippians (iv. 22) as containing its "saints," saints who send special greetings to the Macedonian brethren. The *Domus Cæsaris* included "the whole of the Imperial household, the meanest slaves, as well as the most powerful courtiers"; "all persons in the Emperor's service, whether slaves or freemen, in Italy and even in the provinces." The literature of sepulchral inscriptions at Rome is peculiarly rich in allusions to members of "the Household." And it is from this quarter, particularly from discoveries in it made early in the last century, that Lightfoot gets good reasons for thinking that in Phil. iv. 22 we may, quite possibly, be reading a greeting *from* Rome sent by the very persons (speaking roundly) who are here greeted in the Epistle *to* Rome. A place of burial on the Appian Way, devoted to the ashes of Imperial freedmen and slaves, and other similar receptacles, all to be dated with practical certainty about the middle period of the first century, yield the following names: *Amplias*, *Urbanus*, *Stachys*, *Apelles*, *Tryphæna*, *Tryphosa*, *Rufus*, *Hermes*, *Hermas*, *Philologus*, *Julius*, *Nereis*; a name which might have denoted *the sister* (see ver. 15) of a man Nereus.

Of course such facts must be used with due reserve in inference. But they make it abundantly clear that, in Lightfoot's words, "the names and allusions at the close of the Roman Epistle are in keeping with the circumstances of the metropolis in St Paul's day." They help us to a perfectly truthlike theory. We have only to suppose that among St Paul's converts and friends in Asia and Eastern Europe many either belonged already to the ubiquitous "Household," or entered it after conversion, as purchased slaves or otherwise; and that some time before our Epistle

was written there was a large draft from the provincial to the metropolitan department; and that thus, when St Paul thought of personal Christian friends at Rome, he would happen to think, mainly, of "saints of Cæsar's Household." Such a theory would also, by the way, help to explain the emphasis with which just these "saints" sent their greeting, later, to Philippi. Many of them might have lived in Macedonia, and particularly in the *colonia* of Philippi, before the time of their supposed transference to Rome.

We may add, from Lightfoot's discussion, a word about "the households," or "people"—of Aristobulus and Narcissus—mentioned in the greetings before us. It seems at least likely that the Aristobulus of the Epistle was a grandson of Herod the Great, and brother of Agrippa of Judea; a prince who lived and died at Rome. At his death it would be no improbable thing that his "household" should pass by legacy to the Emperor, while they would still, as a sort of clan, keep their old master's name. Aristobulus' servants, probably many of them Jews (*Herodion*, St Paul's kinsman, may have been a retainer of this *Herod*), would thus now be a part of "the Household of Cæsar," and the Christians among them would be a group of "the Household saints." As to the Narcissus of the Epistle, he may well have been the all-powerful freedman of Claudius, put to death early in Nero's time. On his death, his great *familia* would become, by confiscation, part of "the Household"; and its Christian members would be thought of by St Paul as among "the Household saints."

Thus it is at least possible that the holy lives which here pass in such rapid file before us were lived not only in Rome, but in a connexion more or less close

with the service and business of the Court of Nero. So freely does grace make light of circumstance.

Now it is time to come from our preliminaries to the text.

Ver. 1. **But**—the word may mark the movement of thought from his own delay in reaching them to Phœbe's immediate coming—**I commend to you Phœbe, our sister,** (this Christian woman bore, without change, and without reproach, the name of the Moon-Goddess of the Greeks,) **being a ministrant** (*διάκονον*) **of the**

Ver. 2. **Church which is in Cenchreæ**, the Ægæan port of Corinth; **that you may welcome her, in the Lord,** as a fellow-member of His Body, **in a way worthy of the saints,** with all the respect and the affection of the Gospel, **and that you may stand by her** (*παραστῆτε αὐτῇ*) **in any matter in which she may need you,** stranger as she will be at Rome. **For she on her part** (*αὕτη*) **has proved*** a **stand-by** (almost a **champion,** one who *stands up for* others, *προστάτις*) **of many,** aye, **and of me** among them.

Ver. 3. **Greet Prisca** † **and Aquila** (*Ἀκύλας*), **my co-workers in Christ Jesus;** the friends **who**

Ver. 4. (*οἵτινες*) **for my life's sake submitted their own throat** to the knife (it was at some stern crisis otherwise utterly unknown to us, but well known in heaven); **to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the Churches of the Nations;** for they saved the man whom the Lord consecrated to the service of the Gentile

Ver. 5. world. **And the Church at their house** greet with them; that is, the Christians of their neighbourhood, who used Aquila's great room as their

* Lit., "*did prove*": it is the epistolary-aorist.

† Read Πρίσκαν not Πρίσκιλλαν.

house of prayer; the embryo of our parish or district Church. This provision of a place of worship was an old usage of this holy pair, whom St Paul's almost reverent affection presents to us in such a living individuality. They had gathered "*a domestic Church*" at Corinth, not many months before (1 Cor. xvi. 19). And earlier still, at Ephesus (Acts xviii. 26), they wielded such a Christian influence that they must have been a central point of influence and gathering there also. In Prisca, or Priscilla, as it has been remarked,* we have "an example of what a married woman may do, for the general service of the Church, in conjunction with home-duties, just as Phœbe is the type of the unmarried servant of the Church, or deaconess."

**Greet Epænĕtus, my beloved, who is the firstfruits of Asia,**† that is of the Ephesian Province, **unto Christ**; doubtless one who "owed his soul" to St Paul in that three years' missionary pastorate at Ephesus, amd who was now bound to him by the indescribable tie which makes the converter and converted one.

Ver. 6. **Greet Mary**—a Jewess probably, *Miriam* or *Maria*,—**for she** (*ἥτις*) **toiled hard for you**‡; when and how we cannot know.

Ver. 7. **Greet Andronicus and Junias**, *Junianus*, **my kinsmen, and my fellow-captives in** Christ's **war** (*συναιχμαλώτους*); a loving and mindful reference to the human relationships which so freely, but not lightly, he had sacrificed for Christ, and to some persecution-battle (was it at Philippi?) when these good men had shared his prison; **men who** (*οἵτινες*) **are distinguished**

* By the late Dean Howson, in Smith's *Bible Dictionary*.

† So certainly read, not *Ἀχαΐας*.

‡ Reading *ὑμᾶς*.

**among the apostles**; either as being themselves, in a secondary sense, devoted "*apostles*," Christ's missionary delegates, though not of the Apostolate proper, or as being honoured above the common, for their toil and their character, by the Apostolic Brotherhood; **who also before me came to be**, as they are, **in Christ.*** Not improbably these two early converts helped to "goad" (Acts xxvi. 14) the conscience of their still persecuting Kinsman, and to prepare the way of Christ in his heart.

Ver. 8. **Greet Amplias**, *Ampliatus*, **my beloved in the Lord**; surely a personal convert of his own.

Ver. 9. **Greet Urbanus, my co-worker in Christ, and Stachys**—another masculine name—**my beloved.**

Ver. 10. **Greet Apelles, that** (*τὸν*) **tested man in Christ**; the Lord knows, not we, the tests he stood.

**Greet those who belong to Aristobulus'** people.†

Ver. 11. **Greet Herodion, my kinsman.**

**Greet those who belong to Narcissus' people, those who are in the Lord.**

Ver. 12. **Greet Tryphæna and Tryphosa**, (almost certainly, by the type of their names, female *slaves*,) **who toil** in the Lord, perhaps as "servants of the Church," so far as earthly service would allow them.

**Greet Persis, the beloved woman**, (with faultless delicacy he does here say "*my* beloved," as he had said of the Christian *men* mentioned just above,) **for she** (*ἥτις*) **toiled hard in the Lord**; perhaps at some time when St Paul had watched her in a former and more Eastern home.

* The perfect, *γέγονασι*, *γέγοναν*, imports the permanence of their blessed position, up to the date.

† See above, p. 425, on this allusion, and on *Herodion*, and on "*Narcissus' people.*"

Ver. 13. **Greet Rufus**—just possibly the Rufus of Mar. xv. 21, brother of Alexander, and son of Cross-carrying Simon; the family was evidently known to St Mark, and we have good cause to think that St Mark wrote primarily for *Roman* readers—Rufus, **the chosen man in the Lord**, a saint of the *élite*; **and his mother—and mine!** This nameless woman had done a mother's part, somehow and somewhere, to the motherless Missionary, and her lovingkindness stands recorded now

"In either Book of Life, here and above."

Ver. 14. **Greet Asyncrĭtus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrŏbas, Hermes, and the brethren who are with them**; dwellers perhaps in some isolated and distant quarter of Rome, a little Church by themselves.

Ver. 15. **Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and all the saints who are with them**, in their assembly.

Ver. 16. **Greet one another with a sacred kiss**; the Oriental pledge of friendship, and of respect. **All** (read πᾶσαι) **the Churches of Christ greet you**; Corinth, Cenchreæ, "with all the saints in the whole of Achaia" (2 Cor. i. 1).

The roll of names is over, with its music, that subtle characteristic of such recitations of human personalities, and with its moving charm for the heart due almost equally to our glimpses of information about one here and one there and to our total ignorance about others; an ignorance of everything about them but that they were at Rome, and that they were in Christ. We seem, by an effort of imagination, to see, as through a bright cloud, the faces of the company,

and to catch the far-off voices; but the dream "dissolves in wrecks"; we do not know them, we do not know their distant world. But we do know HIM in whom they were, and are; and that they have been "with Him, which is far better," for now so long a time of rest and glory. Some no doubt by deaths of terror and wonder, by the fire, by the horrible wild-beasts, "departed to be with Him"; some went, perhaps, with a dismissal as gentle as love and stillness could make it. But however, they were the Lord's; they are with the Lord. And we, in Him,

> "Are tending upward too,
> As fast as time can move."

So we watch this unknown yet well-beloved company, with a sense of fellowship and expectation impossible out of Christ. This page is no mere relic of the past; it is a list of friendships to be made hereafter, and to be possessed for ever, in the endless life where personality indeed shall be eternal, but where also the union of personalities, in Christ, shall be beyond our utmost present thought.

But the Apostle cannot close with these messages of love. He remembers another and anxious need, a serious spiritual peril in the Roman community. He has not even alluded to it before, but it must be handled, however briefly, now:

Ver. 17. **But I appeal to you, brethren, to watch the persons who make the divisions and the stumbling-blocks** you know of, **alien to the teaching which you learnt** (there is an emphasis on "*you*," as if to difference the true-hearted converts from these troublers);—**and do turn away from them**; go, and keep, out of their

way; wise counsel for a peaceable but effectual resistance.

Ver. 18. **For such people are not bondservants of our Lord Jesus Christ, but they are bondservants of their own belly.** They talk much of a mystic freedom; and free indeed they are from the accepted dominion of the Redeemer—but all the more they are enslaved to themselves; **and by their** (*τῆς*) **pious language and their specious pleas they quite beguile** (*ἐξαπατῶσι*) **the hearts of the simple,** the unsuspicious. And they may perhaps have special hopes of beguiling *you*, because of your well-known readiness to submit, with the submission of faith, to sublime truths; a noble character, but calling inevitably for the safeguards of intelligent caution:

Ver. 19. **For your obedience,** "the obedience of faith," shewn when the Gospel reached you, **was carried** by report **to all men,** and so to these beguilers, who hope now to entice your faith astray. **As regards you, therefore,** looking only at your personal condition, **I rejoice. Only I wish you to be wise as to what is good, but uncontaminated** (by defiling knowledge) **as to what is evil.** He would not have their holy readiness to believe distorted into an unhallowed and falsely tolerant curiosity. He would have their faith not only submissive but spiritually intelligent (*σοφούς*); then they would be alive to the risks of a counterfeited and illusory "Gospel." They would feel, as with an educated Christian instinct, where decisively to hold back, where to refuse attention to unwholesome teaching.

Ver. 20. **But the God of our** (*τῆς*) **peace will crush Satan down beneath your feet speedily.** This spiritual mischief, writhing itself, like the serpent of Paradise, into your happy precincts, is nothing less than a stratagem of the great Enemy's own; a movement

of his mysterious personal antagonism to your Lord, and to you His people. But the Enemy's Conqueror, working in you, will make the struggle short and decisive. Meet the inroad in the name of Him who has made peace for you, and works peace in you, and it will soon be over.* **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be** (or may we not render **is** ?) **with you.**

What precisely was the mischief, who precisely were the dangerous teachers, spoken of here so abruptly and so urgently by St Paul ? It is easier to ask the question than to answer it. Some expositors have sought a solution in the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters, and have found in an extreme school of theoretical "liberty" these men of "pious language and specious pleas." But to us this seems impossible. Almost explicitly, in those chapters, he identifies himself *in principle* with "the capable"; certainly there is not a whisper of horror as regards their principle, and nothing but a friendly while unreserved reproof for the uncharity of their practice. Here he has in his mind men whose purposes and whose teachings are nothing but evil; who are to be—not indeed persecuted but—avoided; not met in conference, but solemnly refused a further hearing. In our view, the case was one of embryo *Gnosticism*. The Romans, so we take it, were troubled by teachers who used the language of Christianity, saying much of "Redemption," and of "Emancipation," and something of "Christ," and of "the Spirit"; but all the while they meant a thing totally different from the Gospel of the Cross. They meant by redemption and freedom, the

* In our short Commentary on the Epistle in *The Cambridge Bible* we advocate a rather different view of these verses in detail. But the main reference seems to us to be what it then seemed.

liberation of spirit from matter. They meant by Christ and the Spirit, mere links in a chain of phantom beings, supposed to span the gulf between the Absolute Unknowable Existence and the finite World. And their morality too often tended to the tenet that as matter was hopelessly evil, and spirit the unfortunate prisoner in matter, the material body had nothing to do with its unwilling, and pure, Inhabitant: let the body go its own evil way, and work out its base desires.

Our sketch is taken from developed Gnosticism, such as it is known to have been a generation or two later than St Paul. But it is more than likely that such errors were present, in essence, all through the Apostolic age. And it is easy to see how they could from the first disguise themselves in the special terminology of the Gospel of liberty and of the Spirit.

Such things may look to us, after eighteen hundred years, only like fossils of the old rocks. They are indeed fossil specimens—but of existing species. The atmosphere of the Christian world is still infected, from time to time—perhaps more now than a few generations ago, whatever that fact may mean—with unwholesome subtleties, in which the purest forms of truth are indescribably manipulated into the deadliest related error; a mischief sure to betray itself, however, (where the man tempted to parley with it is at once wakeful and humble,) by some fatal flaw of pride, or of untruthfulness, or of an uncleanness however subtle. And for the believer so tempted, under common circumstances, there is still, as of old, no counsel more weighty than St Paul's counsel here. If he would deal with such snares in the right way, he must "*turn away from them.*" He must turn away to the Christ

of history. He must occupy himself anew with the primeval Gospel of pardon, holiness, and heaven.

Is the Letter to be closed here at last? Not quite yet; not until one and then another of the gathered circle has committed his greetings to it. And first comes up the dear Timotheus, the man nearest of all to the strong heart of the Apostle. We seem to see him alive before us, so much has St Paul, in one Epistle and another, but above all in his dying Letter to Timotheus himself, contributed to a portrait. He is many years younger than his leader and Christian father. His face, full of thought, feeling, and devotion, is rather earnest than strong. But it has the strength of patience, and of absolute sincerity, and of rest in Christ. Timotheus repays the affection of Paul with unwavering fidelity. And he will be true to the end to his Lord and Redeemer, through whatever tears and agonies of sensibility. Then Lucius will speak, perhaps the Cyrenian of Antioch (Acts xiii. 1); and Jason, perhaps the convert of Thessalonica (Acts xvii. 5); and Sosipater, perhaps the Berean Sopater of Acts xx. 4; three blood-relations of the Apostle, who was not left utterly alone of human affinities, though he had laid them all at his Master's feet. Then the faithful Tertius claims the well-earned privilege of writing one sentence for himself. And Gaius modestly requests his salutation, and Erastus, the man of civic dignity and large affairs. He has found no discord between the tenure of a great secular office and the life of Christ; but to-day he is just a brother with brethren, named side by side with the Quartus whose only title is that beautiful one, "*the*

*brother*," "our fellow in the family of God." So the gathered friends speak each in his turn to the Christians of the City; we listen as the names are given:

Ver. 21. **There greets you Timotheus my fellow-worker, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipatrus, my kinsmen.**

Ver. 22. **There greets you I, Tertius, who wrote the Epistle in the Lord**; he had been simply Paul's conscious pen, but also he had willingly drawn the strokes as being one with Christ, and as working in His cause.

Ver. 23. **There greets you Gaius, host of me and of the whole Church**; universal welcomer to his door of all who love his beloved Lord, and now particularly of all at Corinth who need his Lord's Apostle.

**There greets you Erastus, the Treasurer of the City, and Quartus** (*Kouartos*), **the brother.***

Here, as we seem to discern the scene, there is indeed a pause, and what might look like an end. Tertius lays down the pen. The circle of friends breaks up, and Paul is left alone—alone with his unseen Lord, and with that long, silent Letter; his own, yet not his own. He takes it in his hands, to read, to ponder, to believe, to call up again the Roman converts, so dear, so far away, and to commit them again for faith, and for life, to Christ and to His Father. He sees them beset by the encircling masses of pagan idolatry and vice, and by the embittered Judaism which meets them at every turn. He sees them hindered by their own mutual prejudices and mistakes; for they are

* Ver. 24 is probably to be omitted, as an insertion after date.

sinners still. Lastly, he sees them approached by this serpentine delusion of an unhallowed mysticism, which would substitute the thought of matter for that of sin, and reverie for faith, and an unknowable Somewhat, inaccessible to the finite, for the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And then he sees this astonishing Gospel, whose glorious outline and argument he has been caused to draw, as it was never drawn before, on those papyrus pages; the Truth of God, not of man; veiled so long, promised so long, known at last; the Gospel which displays the sinner's peace, the believer's life, the radiant boundless future of the saints, and, in all and above all, the eternal Love of the Father and the Son.

In this Gospel, "*his* Gospel," he sees manifested afresh his God. And he adores Him afresh, and commits to Him afresh these dear ones of the Roman Mission.

He must give them one word more, to express his overrunning heart. He must speak to them of Him who is Almighty for them against the complex might of evil. He must speak of that Gospel in whose lines the almighty grace will run. It is the Gospel of Paul, but also and first the "*proclamation made by Jesus Christ*" of Himself as our Salvation. It is the Secret "*hushed*" throughout the long æons of the past, but now spoken out indeed; the Message which the Lord of Ages, choosing His hour aright, now imperially commands to be announced to the Nations, that they may submit to it and live. It is the vast Fulfilment of those mysterious Scriptures which are now the credentials, and the watchword, of its preachers. It is the supreme expression of the sole and eternal Wisdom; clear to the intellect of the heaven-taught child; more unfathom-

able, even to the heavenly watchers, than Creation itself. To the God of this Gospel he must now entrust the Romans, in the glowing words in which he worships HIM through the Son in whom He is seen and praised. To this God—while the very language is broken by its own force—he must give glory everlasting, for His Gospel, and for Himself.

He takes the papers, and the pen. With dim eyes, and in large, laborious letters,* and forgetting at the close, in the intensity of his soul, to make perfect the grammatical connexion, he inscribes, in the twilight, this most wonderful of Doxologies. Let us watch him to its close, and then in silence leave him before his Lord, and ours :

Ver. 25. **But to Him who is able to establish you, according to my Gospel, and the proclamation of,** made by, **Jesus Christ, true to (κατὰ) (the) unveiling of (the) Secret hushed in silence during ages of times,** Ver. 26. **but manifested now, and through (the) prophetic Scriptures, according to the edict of the God of Ages, for faith's obedience, published among** Ver. 27. **all the Nations—to God Only Wise, through Jesus Christ—to whom be the glory unto the ages of the ages. Amen.**

* Gal. vi. 11 : "See with *what great letters* I have written to you, *in autograph*!" It has been remarked that this great Doxology bears a literary likeness to other passages which he probably wrote with his own hand.

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